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THE SHOEMADOO OR GREAT PACODA OF PECUE.

REMINISCENCES
OF THE
BURMESE WAR,

In 1824-5-6.

(Originally published in the Asiatic Journal.)

BY

CAPT. F. B. DOVETON,

LATE FIRST MADRAS EUROPEAN FUSILIERS,

AN EYE-WITNESS.

*With Illustrations, from Original Sketches by the
Author.*

LONDON: ALLEN and Co., Leadenhall-street.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE SURVIVING OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS
OF THE AVA WAR, THIS NARRATIVE OF
THAT STIRRING EVENT IS SUBSCRIBED BY
THEIR FRIEND AND COMRADE,

THE AUTHOR.

HAINES HILL, TAUNTON, AUGUST, 1852.

Woodley, Printer, Taunton.

PREFACE.

A FRESH Burmese War has broken out, and a fresh interest is excited through the length and breadth of the land in all that relates to that brave and arrogant people. As the war proceeds, abundance of material will be supplied for writers, and, doubtless, in due course the Press will teem with new works on Ava. In the interim the official despatches, arriving at long intervals, and giving only outlines of the operations, will barely satisfy public curiosity, however interesting they may be to the professional reader.

The operations of the last war were, for the most part, faithfully recorded in one or two able works that appeared at the time; but soldiers were not so much addicted to the “cacoëthes

scribendi" then as they are now, which will account for so little personal narrative of those stirring events being extant.

Under these circumstances I am encouraged to introduce the following sketches to the public. They do not pretend to give a connected account of the war, but are simply a personal narrative, —the enlargement of a Subaltern's Journal,—wherein were hastily dotted down dates, places, and persons in all sorts of circumstances and under all sorts of difficulties. The sketches are, nevertheless, sufficiently linked together to form a consecutive series, and they have the advantage of including in their descriptions some interesting military operations, overlooked, it is believed, by former writers.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS is not the place for any details of the present war, but a few words will be necessary in order to connect one period with another.

From the treaty of Yandaboo, in 1826, until our Cabool disasters in 1841, the little intercourse that subsisted between ourselves and the Burmese remained without any serious interruption. They experienced a change of dynasty, and enjoyed their fair share of those internal commotions peculiar to Asiatic Governments; but that did not concern us. As soon, however, as they heard of a British army having been destroyed at Cabool they began to be get impertinent again, and to cast a longing eye towards the provinces they had ceded to us; and very hostile demonstrations were made in the vicinity of Moulmein. But we had no sooner

recovered our lost ground and re-established our *prestige* in India than the Burmese drew in their horns and adopted a more conciliatory tone. This, however, did not last long: they mistook forbearance for fear. Our envoys were repeated insulted; our subjects at Rangoon persecuted, till matters came to such a climax that Commodore Lambert, with a couple of war-steamers, was dispatched to Rangoon to demand full reparation from the Court of Ava. The rest is soon told; attempts at negotiation utterly failed; insult succeeded insult; and a collision ensued between the vessels and the shore, with severe loss to the Burmese.

On the Commodore's return from his fruitless mission, an expedition was forthwith organized, consisting of 6,000 men, under Gen. Godwin, and a powerful flotilla of war-steamers; and on the 5th and 14th of April respectively, Martaban and Rangoon, with 130 pieces of cannon, were captured, the loss on our side being about 150 men and officers killed and wounded.

CHAPTER I.

EMBARKATION, AND FALL OF RANGOON.

In April, 1824, it was my lot, and a proud and happy lot I thought it, to hold the rank of ensign in the Madras European Regiment, then in garrison at Masulipatam, the capital of the Northern Circars ; and never shall I forget the shouts of joy with which we welcomed the intelligence of a war with the Burmese, in which our own corps was to bear a part. The day that brought the news was, in truth, one of rejoicing, especially to the youngsters among us, who, reckless of the fatal consequences that flow from war, thought only of the opportunities it would afford of personal aggrandizement. The calamities of the many were forgotten in the intoxicating prospects of

the few; and the well-known professional toast of "Prize-money and promotion," and the more barbarous one of "A bloody war and a sickly season," were given and drunk, not simply with due honours, but with the most uproarious applause. This thirst for glory, this love of war, is not confined to the novice in arms, as yet inexperienced in its horrors; it is common to all ranks and to all nations, from the private soldier to the field-marshal—from the barbarous New Zealander to the cultivated and Christianized native of Britain. In the instance before us, all hands, from the colonel downwards, were exulting in the prospects war held out, though, short-sighted creatures that we were, a moment's reflection would have told us that prize-money must be purchased by the blood of thousands, and promotion could only be obtained by the death of those for whom we were at the same time professing the warmest and kindest feelings of friendship. Such is man! But a truce to sentiment, or I shall fall into disfavour at the very threshold.

The Madras European Regiment, at the period I speak of, was 1,300 strong, in a high state of discipline, and, being commanded by a man to whom we all looked up as the very *beau*

idéal of a soldier, we calculated upon making a distinguished figure in the forthcoming campaigns. Under such auspices, we thought, *Teucro duce, et auspice Teucro*, we could not but conquer. But the result proved that we were wrong in our calculations, and that we very much over-rated our commandant's qualifications in the field, though he was an admirable drill, and in other respects a man of superior abilities and of estimable character.

"The Lambs," a name given to my old corps, (I conclude, upon the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, for their gambols and frolics were none of the gentlest) are the oldest and most distinguished regiment of the Madras army, as Indian records can testify. In support of their character, I need only point to their colours, upon which are emblazoned the words "Arcot," "Plassey," "Candore," "Wandewash," "Sholingur," "Nundy Droog," "Amboyna," "Ternate," "Banda," "Pondicherry," "Mahidpoor," and "Ava." In addition to these, they enjoy the distinction of wearing the royal tiger upon their caps and appointments, with the Latin motto, *Spectamur agendo*. From the year 1746, when the regiment was employed near Trichinopoly against the French, under the

celebrated Laurence, up to the present time, its services have been so extensive in their nature as they have invariably been distinguished in their operation; and it has fallen to the lot of few corps in the East to have faced such a variety of foes. The "Lambs" having fought against the French, the Dutch, the Cingalese, and Burmese, besides Indians of every denomination, their organization has undergone many modifications, sometimes consisting only of one battalion, but occasionally of many, according to the exigencies of the service. When I joined them they consisted of one battalion of twelve companies, the East-India Company at that period having only one European regiment of their own at each presidency. These corps are kept up by recruits from home, and drafts from H.M.'s regiments as they return to Europe. Formerly the recruits were of an inferior description, from some mismanagement or other in the Home Department. Their defects, however, partook less of a physical than a moral character, for fighting was the very element in which they delighted, especially when it came seasoned with the pillage of a pagoda or the sacking of a stockade. The truth is, we had some lawless fellows in our ranks in those days, who were

only to be kept under by the iron or, more properly speaking, the hempen rod of discipline, *alias* the cat-o'-nine tails, of which article, I grieve to say, there was then a great consumption in the Madras European Regiment. The cat, however, and regular exercise under our excellent drill had got us into first-rate working order. Only eight companies out of the twelve were ordered to join the expedition: they mustered in all about 900, officers and men.

Reports had long been rife of the excesses of the Burmese on our north-eastern frontier, and of the encounters thereby occasioned between them and small parties of our troops, some of which had terminated much to our disadvantage. At one place, in particular, 1,500 of our troops, under Col. Bowen, were totally repulsed with heavy loss, where the enemy occupied a formidable stockade, named Doodputlee. Many collisions of this nature took place before the declaration of a general war; but at length, the patience of the Governor-General being fairly exhausted by repeated but ineffectual remonstrances to the court of Ava, a manifesto was thundered forth against his golden-footed majesty, and this edict was to be backed by a formidable naval and military expedition, to

take possession of Rangoon, the capital of Pegue and the key of the Burman empire, and which, if terms could not be agreed upon there, was to penetrate into the interior by the line of the Irrawaddy. This noble river is the grand artery of the country, running from north to south for the space of six or seven hundred miles, seldom less than three-quarters of a mile in breadth, and navigable for small vessels up to the very walls of Ummerapoorra.

The first expedition consisted of 8,000 men of all arms, who were followed in a few days by 2,000 more. The infantry regiments composing these were H.M.'s 13th, 38th, 41st, 89th, Madras European Regiment, and the 3rd, 7th, 9th, 12th, 18th, 34th and 43rd Regiment of Madras, and the 20th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry. The native troops employed were all from Madras, with the exception of this last corps, as the Bengal sepoys, for reasons I do not pretend to determine, are less available for foreign service. These troops were conveyed in from thirty-five to forty large transports, and convoyed by H.M.'s ships *Liffey* (of fifty guns), *Larne*, *Slaney*, *Arachne*, and *Sophie*, besides the Hon. Company's cruizers *Hastings*, *Teignmouth*, and a number of small craft adapted for

river service. The beautiful harbour of Port Cornwallis, in the Andaman Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, was to be the rendezvous of the respective divisions from Madras and Calcutta, being near the point of attack. My aim, however, is to limit my narrative as much as possible to the minutiae of the campaign, derived from my personal experience.

Three fine transports arrived at Masulipatam on the 9th of April, 1824, to take our regiment on board. Great was the excitement and bustle of preparation that followed the arrival from Madras of the order for our embarkation. The service we were going upon was altogether of a novel nature; and as it was beyond the seas, we were of course much restricted in servants and baggage. We cast off all extras, and squeezed what we considered indispensable for comfort and cleanliness into a couple of small-sized bullock-trunks, which, being united by a frame of cane-work, formed with the addition of a piece of carpet, a pillow and a counterpane—a sufficiently comfortable sleeping apparatus for Oriental campaigning. All this was adapted to the back of a bullock—the ordinary beast of burden in India—the whole being generally crowned with a camp washing-stand,

brass basin and tea-kettle,—that never-failing source of comfort to an Englishman. These remarks apply only to the humble subaltern; the old hands were more luxurious. On Indian ground, cattle are to be had in any numbers, thereby allowing a person the enjoyment during a march of every thing he has been accustomed to in garrison; but in this case we thought it wiser to concentrate our goods and chattels, being doubtful how far the resources of the country we were bound to would supply us with the means of moving *à l'Indienne*.

Long before the first streak of dawn on the 11th, a part of our regiment was moving down to the point of embarkation, where the huge unsightly barboats of Bunder were in waiting to receive us, under the superintendence of that versatile genius, Mr. Dick Alexander, the master-attendant of the port, of whom it used to be said that he manufactured every thing, from a man-of-war to a mouse-trap. He was, however, as generally respected as he was generally known. Hitherto the active employment every one found in preparing for the move prevented our dwelling much on the more sober features of the promising landscape that was spread out before our mind's eye. The joy of the young-

sters was, I believe, thoroughly without alloy ; they cared but little for themselves,—less, of course, for others. A few there were who, whilst fully alive to the pleasurable prospect before them, could not but reflect at times on the possibility of finding a grave in distant Burmah, and solemn thoughts would obtrude themselves to sober down their excited spirits. There was, however, another class, with whom comparatively few of us appeared to sympathize : I mean the married men. They were linked to India and the dull station we rejoiced to quit, by the closest, the dearest of ties. We bachelors left nothing behind us for which we cared a rush ; whereas they were to be torn from all they held dear on earth : however conscientious in the discharge of their duties, they were now encumbered by a double portion of care and anxiety. Oh ! these sudden partings that precede the tug of war must be bitter moments ! Thank God ! I have been spared them.

Ah ! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress, &c. &c.

But, despite tears and sighs, the word of command had gone forth ; onward we all moved, and the morning gun boomed over our heads, just as we pushed off the quay, and were slowly

dropping down the slimy branch of the Kisthah, upon which the fortress of Masulipatam is situated.

By the 14th the whole of the corps destined for Ava, in all 900, officers and men, together with a large number of camp followers and 500,000 rounds of ammunition, were snugly packed in the vessels, the passage to which was most tedious, as, from the flat nature of the coast, they could not anchor nearer than eight or nine miles. To an inexperienced eye, the decks of an Indiaman, and more particularly a transport, just before getting under weigh, would present a scene of the most irremediable disorder—confusion worse confounded; and if it should happen to come on to blow just on quitting the anchorage, which, to complete matters, should be about nightfall—why, chaos itself would seem a joke to it! But in an incredibly short space of time both persons and things, live stock and dead, are shaken into their berths; and, be the first night ever so comfortless, the fresh morning air and the bright blue water that greet one immediately on emerging from the close dark cabin to the clean and comparatively spacious quarter-deck soon dispel all recollections of by-gone discomfort, and again,

under their cheering influence, every thing is *couleur de rose*. We mount the poop and inhale the sea-breeze with an indescribable relish, whilst the bounding motion of the vessel, as she is propelled perhaps by a steady six-knot breeze, imparts an elasticity to the frame and a joyousness to the spirits that can only be comprehended by those who have felt it, and which is happily described in those beautiful lines of Byron :—

Oh ! who can tell, save he whose heart has tried,
And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense—the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way ?

The transports consisted mostly of what are called “country ships;” that is, vessels belonging to the Indian ports, and employed only in the Eastern trade. They are a fine class of ships, and of considerable tonnage, officered by Europeans, but manned by natives. From being, however, often freighted with sugar, dates, and such sweet merchandize from the Mauritius, Persian Gulf, or Red Sea, these otherwise desirable vessels become generally the receptacle of all kinds of tropical insects, such as cockroaches, scorpions, tarantulas, and centipedes; these last attain a size which in England would hardly be credited, but I am correct in saying

they are often nine or ten inches in length. The ship in which I was now embarked formed no exception to the general rule; and though cabins were allotted to all the officers according to their rank, few of us availed ourselves of the accommodation, so full were they of these noxious vermin, which seemed to thrive in an extraordinary manner under the influence of the hot air that prevailed below; we all much preferred spreading our carpets on the clean poop, beneath the pure canopy of heaven.

On the 18th of April, we fell in with the fleet from Madras, for which we had been on the look-out for some days, after quitting the Masulipatam roads, during which we cruized about; and after a pleasant passage in company, we made the Andaman Islands on the 1st of May. It was not, however, till the 3rd that we entered the highly-picturesque and land-locked harbour of Port Cornwallis, being detained by baffling winds, and here we were much gratified at seeing the Bengal division of transports at anchor. Having been longer on our passage than was anticipated, we were obliged to water here, but we were amply compensated for the loss of time by the beauties of the scenery, which were of a high and striking order.

At this distant period, I have not the clearest recollection of the beauties of the place, but I well remember the pleasing surprise we all experienced on nearing the Great Andaman, which had a most majestic appearance from the offing, with its bold and precipitous coast thickly clothed with forest down to the water's edge, whilst our surprise was much enhanced by the sudden manner we came upon Port Cornwallis, the entrance to which is by a remarkably narrow channel, with rocks on either side. Though it blew tolerably fresh outside, the interior of the bay was smooth as a mill-pond, and beautiful was the sight of some thirty vessels riding at anchor in stately grandeur, whilst the Bengal row-boats (a craft attached to the pilot service, and in this instance adapted for the navigation of the Irrawaddy,) flitted about like fairy messengers, decked out with the striped bunting, symbolic of the Hon. John Company. All was full of life and hope. Visits were paid and civilities exchanged between the different ships, whilst ever and anon the melodious strains of the military band lent their aid to enliven the scene and give additional elasticity to our spirits. The harbour is bounded on all sides by steep hills, clothed with the most luxuriant vegetation to

its very brink : and so deep is the water, which moreover is beautifully transparent, that the largest vessels would anchor half a cable's length from the shore. The firing of the morning and evening gun by the different men-of-war, with the usual accompaniment of drums and bugles from the troops, re-echoed by the surrounding hills, produced the finest effect ; and though I write after a lapse of sixteen years, methinks the fine bugles of the 13th Light Infantry still ring in my ears as I then heard them. Some of us attempted an excursion ashore at the site of the old settlement we had once unsuccessfully planted, and traces of which were still visible in some ruined walls and faint vestiges of a garden. Game we found none, as the tangled nature of the jungle was an effectual bar to all spirit of sporting enterprize ; but I remember we passed a pleasant hour or two amongst the rocks that lined the sea-shore, which abounded in oysters of a large size and excellent flavour, and on these we feasted.

On the 5th, the fleet got under weigh for Rangoon, having first despatched two companies of the 13th L.I., with the 20th Bengal N.I., to attack Cheduba, and the 34th M.N.I. to attack Cape Negrais, being possessions of his golden-

footed majesty; both of which fell with credit to our arms and at little loss of life. A gale of some severity scattered our fleet on its passage, but by the 9th we were tolerably well together again, thanks to the never-failing vigilance of the men-of-war, which kept us in tight order and well in hand, acting the part of whippers-in. When we made the Burman coast, and were approaching the mouth of the Rangoon river, which is a branch of the celebrated Irrawaddy, the interest that was excited on board was intense, and much was the skipper's telescope in requisition, as the most adventurous amongst us crowded the rigging to catch a distant and uncertain glimpse of this *terra incognita*, for such in truth Burmah was, not only to us subordinates, but to the Government we served—for there is no denying that, at the breaking out of the war, the most remarkable ignorance was manifested by our Indian officials touching the nature and resources of the country.

On making Pegue from the southward, its appearance is any thing but pre-possessing, nothing but flat line dotted with palmyra trees being visible, whilst the water is very shallow and muddy. When, however, we entered the mouth of the Rangoon river the country, though

still flat, was seen to much greater advantage, being well clothed with wood of a luxuriant growth, whilst numerous smiling villages, with their adjacent paddy-fields on either bank of the noble stream, seemed already to promise us abundant supplies when our commissariat was exhausted. It was on the 10th of May that we made our *entrée* into the Burman waters, and we did it in a most gay and gallant style, the "Liffey," of fifty guns, leading the way, followed closely by most of the transports in full sail, all simultaneously hoisting the British ensign, in honour of the occasion. Shortly after we entered the river the tide turned, which obliged us to anchor at the distance of fifteen miles from Rangoon, and this afforded our chief an opportunity, in conjunction with his staff, for making his final arrangements for an attack upon the town the following day. We passed the night at anchor, and there was much to interest us in our novel situation. I have still a tolerably clear recollection of this—the first night I passed beneath a Burman sky. All of us, as if with one consent, loitered on the poop to a much later period than usual, and sad was the havoc committed upon the captain's Chinsurah cheroots and brandy-pawny, to assist our discussions, and

to give zest to our conversation, which of course mainly turned upon the wide field of honour and glory which now lay stretched far and wide around us, only waiting for some gallant hands to reap the harvest! Hitherto we had discovered no warlike symptoms, the only living beings visible being, to all appearance, harmless villagers; but as night set in, we could discern, far as the eye could reach, in the direction of Rangoon, beacons lit on every point. Fire-rafts, as yet there were none, our attack in this quarter being unexpected.

On the morning of the 11th the fleet again got under weigh, and, with the aid of the tide, rapidly ascended the river, the frigate still leading the advance, and the steamer "Diana," or "fire-ship," as the Burmans call her, paddling about, sometimes on one flank and sometimes on the other, to the great terror of the villagers. We had not, however, proceeded three or four miles before two guns opened upon us from a small chokey, or guard-house, on the left bank of the river, which were promptly silenced by some of the men-of-war, which stood close in shore and gave them a broadside. One or two of the enemy's shot fell astern of our ship, at but a short distance, and a momentous event I

considered it, this being the first shot I had as yet seen fired in anger. Of course, the enemy had no effectual means of opposing our progress to Rangoon, before which we safely anchored at noon, the men-of-war's boats sinking, burning, and destroying, with the most laudable zeal, all that they could find combustible on either bank. The celebrated temple of Shoe Dagon, for which Rangoon is famous, was conspicuous in the distance long before we reached the place. It is nearly 400 feet high, and, being richly gilded from its broad base to its tapering summit, is certainly one of the finest artificial objects that can well be conceived. It is built on a rising ground, about two and a half miles to the northward of the town, and served as a military position of considerable importance during the period the British troops occupied the country, many a British soldier having breathed his last on earth within range of this splendid heathen pile.

The town of Rangoon is situated twenty-four miles up the river of the same name, and on its left bank. The river, within a short distance of the town, takes a somewhat sudden bend to the westward. The place, without having anything imposing in its appearance, has certainly a novel and striking character. To eyes accustomed

only to the grandeur and regularity of European cities, it naturally presented an assemblage of fragile bamboo tenements, and nothing more, of considerable extent, and encircled by a wooden fence, peculiar, I believe, to the Indo-Chinese nations, and known to us by the name of a "stockade." To an observer, on the contrary, curious in Eastern customs, the first glimpse of Rangoon must have been fraught with very considerable interest, presenting, as it did, such a contrast to any thing we had been accustomed to in India, and opening to the inquiring mind such a field for investigation (in connection with the habits of its population) touching the shades of difference that separate Hindus from Buddhists. All, however, must have been gratified at the fine sight the fleet presented, as one by one we dropped our anchors before the devoted place.

The only *contretemps* that occurred was the grounding of the "Larne" on her way up; but she soon got off, and, after all, reached the scene of action in time to give the enemy a broadside, to deliver which she stood close in shore, and terrible was its effect amongst the frail buildings that lined the beach, many of which were at once levelled with the dust. After this exploit,

however, the "Larne," by some mishap or other, again ran ashore on the opposite bank, where at low water she was left literally high and dry, and apparently in some jeopardy from the neighbouring foe ; but her gallant commander, Capt. Marryat, contrived to keep them at bay, till relieved from anxiety on that score by the disembarkation of four companies of my regiment for her protection, and on this service my lot was cast.

The means of defence at the enemy's disposal were very trifling, as we had quite taken them by surprise. There was, however, one battery of twelve guns, from which they presumed to fire upon us for a short time ; but the "Liffey" disposed of this in a summary manner, and upon visiting the spot on the following day I perceived every gun was dismounted from its carriage, and the large wooden gates of the town, which were closed when the "Liffey" anchored, and about a hundred yards from her broadside, were perforated by her forty-two pound shot, like cards cut for gun-wadding! It was interesting to watch the effect of the shot from the men-of-war, the course of which could occasionally be traced by clouds of dust and fragments of tiles and brick, as the iron missiles tore

the roofs off some of the larger dwellings. So infectious was the excitement that the masters of the transports in many cases could not resist the opportunity of scaling their honey-combed carronades; but I believe they more frequently fired off their sponges and rammers than shot or shell; upon the whole, however, Rangoon cost us little powder and shot. It was soon evident that the show of resistance offered was only to afford the population (some 40,000) time to leave the town with their valuables under the Burman garrison, in spite of our proclamations to the Peguers, holding out hopes, if not promises, (so report said,) of liberation from Burman bondage in return for their co-operation. A portion of the troops was, however, landed with all practicable despatch, but not before the town was cleared of its valuables and its inhabitants through the vigilance of the foe, so that we had nothing to do but to take possession, simply substituting the British for the Burman standard.

It has often struck me as very surprising, that so little of value was captured at Rangoon, when it is considered how extensive its trade was in timber, &c., and how little time was allowed the inhabitants for secreting or carrying off their property. Of government property there was

nothing taken that could be made available as prize excepting the contents of the arsenal, which seemed better adapted to the museum of an antiquary than for the purposes of war, being the contributions of all nations and the manufacture of all ages; and here it must be admitted that the art of gunnery was by no means the *forte* of our new foe. They seldom attempted to traverse their heavy guns, which were only intended to fire in one direction. Their own artillerymen, in fact, were often in greater danger than ourselves from these impracticable affairs. In the management of their swivels and jingals, the Burmans were evidently at home, for these were generally fired with considerable precision. It was a singular circumstance that no matchlock was ever found in use during the war—at least I never saw or heard of one—although this is the ordinary fire-arm of most Eastern nations. The muskets levelled against us were for the most part English manufacture, being condemned stores of the East-India Company, bought up, I conclude, by speculators for the Burman market, where they of course found a ready sale.

I must now, for a short time, lose sight of the wider field of operations, and give some account

of my personal proceedings. Opposite the town of Rangoon, is the smaller and meaner-looking one of Dalla, separated from it by about 1,000 yards of rapid water. Here it was that the "Larne" had grounded; and soon after the event four companies of the Madras European Regiment, as previously stated, were sent ashore to protect her. It was an exciting moment when the general's aide-de-camp jumped on board, and after a good deal of mysterious whispering with our colonel the order was issued to hold ourselves in readiness to disembark at Dalla at nightfall. Knapsacks were packed, havresacks filled, (for on active service such matters are as common to officers as men,) pistols loaded, swords sharpened, and in short every preparation made both for offence and defence. Though no hostile demonstration had as yet been made from the Dalla side, it was not without feelings of anxiety as to the reception we were likely to meet that we quietly pulled off from the ship's side, under shadow of the night. At broad daylight the place appeared deserted, but we thought it far from improbable that advantage might be taken of the darkness for causing us some annoyance; and so in a trifling degree it proved, for just as some of our boats touched the

shore several shots were discharged into them from houses overhanging the river, which of course drew upon them a heavy fire from our lads, who were only too glad of the opportunity of having a shot at a *real* enemy, after playing at soldiers so many years on the well-trod parade ground of Masulibunder. In spite of this attempt to frighten us, we were all soon formed upon *terra firma*, and after threading our way through a number of narrow streets, where occasionally a shot or two was fired at us, we reached the point to which we were destined, viz., where the "Larne" lay high and dry, and here we were to bivouac till the following morning. The dwellings being all deserted, it was perfectly impossible to prevent the soldiers from making free with what they could find. The bleating of goats and cackling of fowls resounded on all sides, and sad was the havoc committed amongst them on this night by our hungry soldiers. We all supped on grilled chicken on that occasion, from the colonel to the private, and a considerable number of these animals were lying about dead the following morning, being, strange to say, left behind when we crossed the river!

It was late before I retired to rest on that,

my first night's campaigning, and as our noisy soldiers sunk one by one to sleep, overcome by the excitement they had undergone in their warfare against the poultry-yard, &c., a few moments were afforded us for meditating on our new position, and contemplating the strange scene which everywhere presented itself; and this last was facilitated by the large fires our men had thought proper to kindle for cooking purposes.

We were necessarily cut off for the present from that part of the army that occupied Rangoon, which, it soon became evident, had been anything but idle since their landing, for about ten o'clock at night a large portion of the town appeared wrapped in flames, and so combustible were the materials of which it was composed, that it is surprising how any part could have escaped in the absence of fire-engines. The conflagration had a peculiarly grand effect, seen by us across an expanse of water, in which the flames were reflected in a remarkable manner, whilst the shouts of the soldiery (shall I say drunken?), and the crackling noise of the burning bamboos, gave the whole affair a dash of romance, after the dull routine of life in India, which, I grieve to record, was quite refreshing.

How strange, that a rational being should take such delight in scenes of destruction that often entail misery and ruin on thousands of his fellow-creatures! But so it is; and so it will be as long as this world remains as it is. Some philosophers have distinguished man as a *cooking* animal; for my part, I think he may not be inappropriately classed as a *destroying* animal,—no other that I am aware of, except his very near relative, the monkey, taking such peculiar pleasure in acts and scenes of destruction. This fire, we found on the morrow, had originated in the excesses of some drunken vagabonds, who had fallen in with stores of wines and spirits. Indeed, it was no easy matter to prevent a good deal of mischief being done in a place taken possession of under such circumstances; and its being vacated by its population offered temptations not to be resisted by even British troops.

On this night I took up my quarters in the hut of some unhappy Burman, whose fears had probably hurried him away, with his family, to find a comfortless abode in the recesses of the neighbouring jungle. It was a frail concern, built for the most part of wood and bamboo. Howbeit, I slept soundly, wrapt up in my boat-cloak, and with my knapsack for a pillow, and

my trusty blade within my grasp ; for though we did not literally

Lay down to rest,
With corslets laced,
Pillowed on buckler cold and hard, &c.,

our present description did not fall short of the poet's description of a reposing warrior. On rising the next morning, we were agreeably surprised to find the "Larne" had floated with the tide, and was now snugly moored in the middle of the stream. Our service on her account being therefore no longer necessary, and it not being considered desirable just then to leave a force at Dalla, we were conveyed across the river to a large wooden building outside the town, there to wait till joined by the remainder of the regiment, which had not as yet disembarked.

On reaching the opposite bank of the river, there was much in every way to interest us, and we looked about more especially for the effect of our shot. Along the outside of the stockade skirting the river, were lying the bodies of some fifteen or twenty of the enemy, killed principally by grape-shot from the discharges of the frigate. They were fine, muscular-built fellows, and their athletic frames contrasted strongly with the light

and almost effeminate forms of the Hindus we had brought over the water to vanquish them. In colour, form, feature and custom they differ materially from our Indians, and we readily conceived, from the dauntless bearing which even death had not yet obliterated from their hard and flat features, that the conquest of Ava might be easier in theory than in practice. There was one brawny fellow in particular that arrested our attention, as he lay on his back with his huge limbs thrown out at length, as if he had been struck down at full speed. He had been hit in the head by a grape-shot, which, smashing his nose, had escaped by the back of the head. It was the first case we happened to see of the effect of a gun-shot upon a Burman—a sort of first-fruits of the expedition—and it read a lesson to us youngsters on the perishable nature of our carcasses, and the formidable description of foe we were about to encounter, that was by no means unseasonable in our then somewhat careless and boastful mood.

I need hardly in this place attempt a description of Rangoon, which has been frequently given by much abler pens. Suffice it here to say, that the fortified part of the town is something of an oval form, about three or four miles

in extent, and resting on the river. The houses are mostly wooden and tiled, and the place is surrounded by a strongly-built wooden stockade, averaging in height from eighteen to twenty feet, looped for musketry, and flanked at proper intervals (if I remember rightly) by square bastions, whilst a platform is erected to serve as a banquette. On all sides, excepting the river, runs a deep and wide ditch; and, upon the whole, against any but a civilized enemy the place was doubtless well calculated to make a formidable resistance. There is a peculiarity in the town of Rangoon which is not met with in India; I allude to the custom the Burmese have of elevating their dwellings some feet from the ground on piles, to protect them from the inundations which the heavy rains of those latitudes frequently occasion. This custom, however necessary as regards the health, and perhaps the safety, of the occupants, gives rise to many abominable nuisances, as we knew from experience, —for all the houses throughout the town being equally raised, there is an open communication underneath the whole place, and this being the receptacle of filth of every description, and impervious to man, is selected by the dogs, cats, pigs and poultry as their favourite promenade.

Of the two latter there was soon unluckily a scarcity, our hungry soldiery having put them all to the sword most speedily. The nuisance was consequently confined to the swarms of starving pariah dogs and cats left behind by their runaway masters, without any ostensible means of subsistence; and these, it must be admitted, by their increased exertions, amply compensated for the absence of the defunct pigs and fowls, for, what with howling and mewing, our slumbers at Rangoon were anything but unbroken.

In the course of an hour or two we were joined by the remainder of the regiment, when, lines having been allotted to us in a portion of the extensive suburbs between the town and the great pagoda, at the distance of two miles, the whole corps (about 900 strong) marched through Rangoon, with colours flying and drums beating. As ensign, I bore one of the colours, and proud was I of the honour, empty as it nevertheless was, whilst traversing a deserted town in Ava! In our progress, it was evident that the demons of desolation and destruction had already been actively employed. We frequently stumbled over 42-pound shot, from the "Liffey's" well-pointed carronades, which were thickly strewed

around, the street for some distance being in a straight line ; whilst dead animals, killed by the shot, mutilated furniture, headless idols, bales of cotton, tobacco, and such-like bulky goods, torn open and scattered about the streets, gave manifest proof of the pillaging qualifications of our *Christian* warriors. The town had been much damaged by our shot, few of which had missed their mark ; but from the nature of the materials used in its construction, the damage done could soon be repaired, by drawing on the neighbouring jungle for a good supply of teak and bamboo.

We marched through the stockade, and on emerging from the opposite or northern side, where a handsome and well-constructed causeway connects the town with the great pagoda, at the distance of two miles and a half, every step of our way was fraught with interest. On either side for the whole distance were seen luxuriant gardens, abounding in mangoe, jack, cocoa, and other tropical fruit trees, whilst from amid their grateful shade were seen the many picturesque Chinese-looking buildings, termed *kioums*, or monasteries, which abound in that seat of Buddhism ; and far and near, the elegant spiral pagodas peculiar to the country, of every size, some highly gilded, added grace and novelty

to the scene ; though upon this, our first appearance on the stage, the scorching sun by which we were greeted made a noon-day march, though only of two miles, much more irksome than we at all anticipated. At length we were duly distributed in sundry buildings on either side of the road, that had been allotted to us by the Quarter-master General. The sun was on the decline before we settled in our new quarters ; and having made but a slight breakfast upon the fragments of the previous night's supper, there was a simultaneous craving for "something to eat," with hardly any prospect of getting a mouthful : I allude to the officers, who upon this occasion were not supplied by the commissariat. The men had been served out with two or three days' rations on quitting the vessels ; but we *griffs* were so full of day-dreams, that the wants of the flesh were somewhat overlooked. As well as I can recollect, the party to which I attached myself tasted little or nothing from "morn till dewy eve," when we regaled ourselves on the carcase of a tough old billy-goat, the fortune of war had placed at our disposal, which, being converted into soup, was devoured after a most primitive fashion—knives, forks, spoons and crockery, being dispensed with.

Upon referring to my journal I see, under the date of May 13th, the simple remark, "Very little to eat all day;" and this was the opening day of my first campaign! On the following day, however, the good-natured captain of our vessel took the trouble of sending us a capital dinner ashore, anticipating our difficulties; and by the third day the mess supplies and servants of the regiment, having disentangled themselves from the apparent confusion consequent on the landing of a large force, joined us, and enabled us, for a time at least, to go through the form of meals—though latterly they had become almost as unsubstantial as Timon's feast.

As an event of considerable interest in connection with the landing of the British troops at Rangoon, I must not omit to mention the narrow escape from death, at the hands of our barbarous foe, of some American missionaries, together with a few European merchants, who had long been located there—the missionaries with the noble object of planting the glorious gospel in this benighted land. The Burmans, in their anger and ignorance, when intelligence was first brought that the fleet was ascending the river, made no distinction between Englishmen and other civilized beings, but at once decided on

putting to instant death all men having the semblance of Englishmen ; in other words, all having white faces, and guilty of wearing *hats*. All coming under this description were hurried, fettered, into the custom-house, under a strong guard. Hasty preparations were here made for their execution, and the sand, I have heard, was even spread to lick up their innocent blood, when, through a merciful Providence, the thunder of the “ Liffey’s ” heavy guns startled every ear ; and while the huge shot ploughed up the street, carrying in its course destruction and dismay, one iron messenger seemed specially directed by Heaven for the rescue of the missionaries ; for when the executioner had raised his weapon to give the fatal stroke, a cannon-ball tore its way through the brick wall that intervened between the building and the frigate, and passed out on the opposite side, without injuring any one of the party. It acted as a reprieve sent by Providence ; and though the Burmans in their hasty retreat dragged their captives to some little distance with them, reserving their execution till a more favourable moment, the opportune arrival of an advanced party of soldiers, pushed forward by the General for the express purpose, rescued these poor fellows from an untimely end.

CHAP. II.

ATTACK UPON KIMMENDINE.

DAY had scarcely dawned on the 3rd of June, 1824, when three columns of infantry, European and native, of about equal strength, and numbering in all 2,400 men, gradually formed up at the base of the Dagon pagoda, the brilliancy of which, piercing the darkness, contrasted strongly and strangely with the dense and black mass of forest which on two sides bounds it.

Hark ! through the silence of the cold, dull night,
The hum of *soldiers* gathering rank on rank !
Lo ! dusky masses steal, in dubious sight,
Along the leagured wall and bristling bank.

To me there was ever, I confess, something peculiarly fascinating in this early "marshalling in arms" by the dubious morning light, for a hos-

tile purpose. There was the martial and measured tramp of the soldiers, as company after company fell into its place—the ringing noise of the firelocks, at the words “Order arms!”—the rattling of bayonets and ramrods—the clattering of steel scabbards, as commandants and staff officers galloped to and fro amongst the ranks, the men answering to their names—and the occasional authoritative tone of an officer’s voice—then the glittering tips of the well-polished bayonets, and the sparkling of the men’s caps and breastplates, (by which alone could their presence be discerned amidst surrounding objects,) threw a dash of romance over the whole affair singularly attractive to a young soldier who really loved, or fancied that he loved, his profession.

The object of this formidable “gathering” was to attack the enemy’s strong position of Kimmendine, on different points. But, before proceeding further, let us describe where and what Kimmendine was, or *Come-and-dine*, as we soon familiarly called it.

The British army had not been long in position at Rangoon, before stockades sprung up like mushrooms in every direction; so that, look which way we would, there was ever a pleasing

variety from which to pick and choose whenever our general wished to relieve the monotony of the cantonment by the excitement of a sortie. The place in question, at the period referred to, far exceeded all the other stockades in importance, and appeared from the great extent of its works and the strength of its garrison to be the enemy's head-quarters. It was situated on the left bank of the river, at the distance of eight or ten miles from Rangoon, though by land it was four or five miles nearer. The ground on which the stockade was erected sloped down to the river, along which it stretched to the extent of perhaps 300 yards, whilst its breadth might have been 200 or 250; it was, of course, newly constructed of the usual materials with which every jungle abounds, and embraced the village of Kimmen-dine, the most conspicuous buildings of which consisted of some two or three decent-looking tiled houses appertaining to the priesthood, with the addition of a few ungilded, unpretending pagodas. Rumour gave this place a very strong garrison, as many as 20,000 men; but, perhaps, 10,000 was nearer the mark, and it is better, when putting these matters on record, to be reasonable as to numbers.

And here it may not be irrelevant to give a

descriptive sketch of a stockade, a species of field fortification very general among the Indo-Chinese nations, and in the construction of which they all appear to be more or less expert. The custom of stockading, of course, originated in the abundant materials offered so readily by their never-failing and extensive forests. Stockades were sometimes built entirely of bamboo, at others of timber. The bamboo in Ava, be it observed, is remarkable for its gigantic growth, far exceeding any thing of the kind met with in India. Some idea may be formed of it when I say that it is not unfrequently from nine to twelve inches in diameter, and the hollow compartments, which were commonly used by the natives for holding water, are nearly, if not quite as large as a ship's bucket. There was necessarily a good deal of irregularity in the form of these stockades, depending on the shape of the village or position to be enclosed. The large towns, such as Rangoon, Prome, Shoeghein, &c., were all defended by timber stockades on a grander scale. These were, of course, of old construction, and, being permanent works, differed materially in strength and finish from the almost ephemeral productions of the jungle, which nevertheless, at times, bothered us and

our artillery in a manner we little anticipated. These temporary works averaged from ten to twelve feet in height, being formed of the bamboo or timber, driven perpendicularly into the ground, generally in double rows, and united by transverse beams. They were looped for musketry, whilst larger apertures were arranged at necessary intervals for cannon or jingals. There was almost invariably a trench in the interior, the earth from which, being piled against the stockade, formed a sort of parapet, and enabled a person standing in the trench to fire through the loopholes with comparative little risk, either from cannon ball or bullet. Externally, stockades were commonly protected by an abatis, frequently of considerable depth, formed of branches of trees carefully pointed at the ends, and firmly fixed in the ground in an outward direction. Beyond the abatis, again, rows of short bamboo spikes were planted, which, being concealed by the long grass, inflicted most dangerous wounds on the feet of our native troops more especially, they being but imperfectly protected. There was often a light railing running outside the whole, with a dry ditch between the stockade and abatis. Though these works were not constructed upon

the scientific principles of a Vauban, they were not altogether without flanking defences, such as demi-lunes, ravelins, or redoubts, whilst the better description of stockade was generally defended by square bastions, at regular intervals. From the above sketch it may be conceived that these wooden walls, however barbarous, opposed difficulties by no means despicable to our disciplined troops. *Fas est ab hoste doceri*, and I cannot but think that our men of science may have occasionally gathered a wrinkle from the uncivilized Burmans.

But to return to the troops, whom we left forming up at the base of the great pagoda. There were three columns to operate against Kimmendine, under the command of Colonels Hodgson and Smith, and Major Frith. The first two were to advance upon the place by different routes, whilst the latter was to proceed to a distant point, to intercept the enemy in their anticipated retreat. In addition to this force, the Commander-in-Chief proceeded in person by water, with a division of gun-boats and part of H.M.'s 41st regiment. Nothing, in short, was omitted that promised to ensure our success; for the place to be attacked, being above Rangoon, afforded the enemy, as long as

they possessed it, every facility for floating down their fire-rafts amongst our shipping, in the construction of which they were as indefatigable as ingenious.

It was my lot to be attached to the column under the command of Colonel Smith, which was composed of 250 of the Madras European regiment, five companies of the 3rd light infantry, the 8th M.N.I., two camel howitzers, and a mortar, these last being, in the absence of draught cattle, borne upon men's shoulders. This body was to march direct for the point of attack, taking *en route* some other works, which had been lately constructed. The distance by land must have been from four to five miles, the road lying through a dense forest.

At length, all requisite preliminaries having been made, and the commanders having put themselves at the head of their respective columns, the bugles sounded the "advance," and immediately we found ourselves in motion, winding our way round the base of old Shoe Dagon, by which the road lay; and in a few moments more we were all shrouded in the dark and silent jungle. As we moved off, each column diverged for its respective route; and now, as

usual, I shall confine my details to the events of my own narrow sphere, as seen through the optics of an ensign.

It was a portentous moment with me when I was fairly in motion towards the hidden foe. The hour, however, was as full of hope as of interest; and bright, though distant, were the visions that flitted before my mind's eye, of sparkling crosses and glittering medals, those pretty baubles so dear to every soldier, but in the distribution of which our Government is so unaccountably niggardly. "*Palmam qui meruit ferat*" is the motto that is supposed to accompany every military order; but in respect to the British service it becomes too often a downright mockery, where such honours are either showered on all indiscriminately, as in the case of the Waterloo medal, or limited to rank, as in that of the Order of the Bath, leaving merit almost out of the question: a soldier's worth being, in fact, measured by his *servitude* rather than his *services*, the *quantity* rather than the *quality* of his performances.

The jungle round Rangoon was very dense and luxuriant: forest trees of every kind, such as the stately teak, the feathery tamarind, the umbrageous mango, and the light and graceful

bamboo, sheltering an infinite variety of shrubs and plants, the least of which would probably rank high in an English conservatory. Indeed, the flowers and fruits peculiar to this clime we soon found were very superior to anything we had met with of the kind in Southern India; the hue of the former was brighter, and the flavour of the latter higher. But of all the productions of the Rangoon jungles or gardens—for, in truth, in many parts they more resembled works of art than the unstudied efforts of Nature—nothing can be compared to the pine-apples, either in number, size, or taste. The plant grew everywhere in the greatest luxuriance, and apparently in a wild state, though the locality in which it was sometimes found would seem to indicate cultivation. On an excursion I once made into the neighbouring jungle with my servant, I remember to have brought back with me from thirty to forty of this delicious fruit. When marching through any part where it abounded, it was difficult to prevent the men from frequently quitting the ranks to gather it. The plant appeared to thrive well even in spots where the sun could hardly penetrate, and in such localities it not unfrequently happened that skirmishes occurred with the enemy, some of

whom I have known bayoneted when taking shelter beneath the prickly leaves of the pine. There were other fruits which equally abounded at Rangoon, and which I may refer to elsewhere: these were far from despicable as an article of sustenance during the scarcity that prevailed, though it is to be feared the too free use we made of them helped to sow the seeds of many of those dysenteric affections which latterly committed such ravages amongst us.

The column, preceded by its advanced guard as a feeler, and with small parties of light infantry scouring the jungle on either flank, was now stealthily winding its way through the forest. The road, or rather pathway, was both narrow and rugged, and had we been vigorously attacked in such a predicament our progress might have been easily arrested. As it was, we moved, as well as I can remember, two or three abreast. The column might have proceeded a mile on its road, when the dead silence, which had been strictly enjoined, was suddenly broken by one or two musket shots, apparently in front, which were quickly followed up by a running fire on both flanks from an invisible enemy, which we, of course, returned with interest, facing to the right and left. At this moment,

and only for a moment, the column made a dead stop, as if it had suddenly come in contact with some serious obstacle, and we in the centre felt ourselves forcibly pushed backwards by the recoil. The firing on our flanks soon ceased, but it continued some little time longer in front. Many shots had crossed us, but none told in my immediate neighbourhood, the enemy having fired high, the general fault of all troops, I believe, whether civilized or uncivilized. We were, however, all on the look-out. Portions of the path by which we moved were lined by a thick and lofty hedge of bamboo. Through this our shot cut its way; and although its effect could not be ascertained, impervious as the underwood was to us disciplinarians, who were obliged to follow each other like a flock of geese, many of the foe doubtless bit the dust upon that occasion. This interruption lasted but for a few minutes, when, the feeble fire of our opponents having been effectually silenced, the column was again put in motion, and as soon as we had an opportunity of communicating with our comrades in front, we learned that Capt. Kyd, of our grenadiers, and five men were wounded. The ice was now, therefore, fairly broken, and we novices in the art of war were witnessing the practical

working of what we had studied, in theory only, on the parade-ground.

“Forward!” was once more the word, and nothing further occurred till we had proceeded a couple of miles or so, when, the column being again suddenly halted, we inferred something was in the wind. Our suspense was of short duration, for after a few minutes of silence, during which the staff were evidently reconnoitring the ground in front, extreme caution being requisite in jungle warfare, to avoid ambushes, a message was transmitted from the front to “pass the word for the guns,” which promptly brushed by us; and we now had the satisfaction of hearing that our progress was interrupted by a genuine stockade—a species of obstruction not yet encountered by the “lambs.” The guns soon opened and gave the enemy a taste of grape and shrapnell, and this was closely followed up by a rattling fire of musketry from both sides. We again were put in motion, and, descending into a hollow, where the ground for some distance appeared partially cleared, we could catch something of a glimpse, on the high ground opposite, of the enemy’s works, as they peeped out here and here from amidst the thick foliage. Had nothing else, however, been visible,

the wreaths of smoke that followed the discharge of their fire-arms would have shown us at once the site of their wooden castle. Our position now exposed us to the enemy's fire, but it was still ill-directed, and consequently few casualties occurred, though the occasional tinkling of a breastplate or the barrel of a firelock, as a ball came into collision with either, and the crackling of dry twigs and branches overhead, from the effect of the shot, kept us pretty well on the *qui vive*. After crossing the hollow, where another momentary pause ensued, the column pushed up the ascent, under an irregular fire from the enemy, backed by as barbarous a yell as could be conceived. We found the ascent steep and slippery, but nevertheless soon crowned the summit, receiving and returning the enemy's fire, and hurling them back their shouts with interest. Here we had the satisfaction of finding that our gallant grenadiers, who led the advance, had forced the enemy's position, by tearing down bodily, in the absence of scaling ladders or hatchets, a portion of the stockade thereby effecting an entrance. At the same moment we saw, far to the left, under and outside the stockade, the active foe in full retreat, and evidently in great disorder. Here was

“ Victory No. 1,” and though the “ spoil ” was not quite so valuable as the Seringapatam or Bhurtpore booty, we took possession of an abundance of jack-fruit and pine-apples, which, in addition to the glory of the affair, refreshed us all amazingly, and amply compensated for the danger and anxiety which we had encountered. Indeed, by many, no *pic-nic* party could have been more relished than these stockading sorties.

We now fell in with our wounded men, of whom there were but few—of killed, hitherto there were none. The captain of the grenadiers, who had been wounded, had received a musket-ball in the calf of his leg, and we now saw him on horseback, with his limb bandaged. I believe, at the time, many of us youngsters thought him an object of no common interest, if not of actual envy! To be wounded in battle, not mortally, however, or even severely—this would perhaps have been *un peu trop*; but to receive a flesh wound, in *the easiest possible* manner, at the hands of an enemy! Here would be news to communicate to fair friends in Old England! To be gazetted as Lieutenant or Ensign ——, wounded in action, and to have one’s name trumpeted about as a hero in every news-room! Here would be fame and immortality—here

would be glory for a young soldier! I am sure it was thus many calculated, though it is to be feared some poor fellows were out in their reckoning, and received their death-warrant where they only looked for an interesting scar. Alas! alas! how delusive a toy is human glory, especially of the military order! What a happy thing is it that the many deformities of war are disguised by such gaudy trappings and such heart-stirring accompaniments!

The stockade we had now captured was by no means a good specimen of that description of fortification, having been very hastily constructed of green materials; and this accounted for its having so easily yielded to the strong arms of our grenadiers. It was, however, of considerable extent, and it further derived advantage from its elevation. There was little to interest us in the interior, which, in the stumps of trees and shrubs that abounded, bore evident marks of having only a few days previously formed a portion of the surrounding forest. There was the usual proportion of native huts, built of bamboo, and thatched with jungle grass; whilst proofs of the sudden and confused flight of the enemy were apparent on every side—muskets, spears, cooking-pots, fruit (such as the jack, pine-apple,

and plantain), bundles of salt-fish (none of the sweetest), bags of rice, curry-stuff, chillies, betel-leaves—in short, every thing that was essential to a Burman—was scattered about in profusion ; while here and there lay a fallen foe, fifteen or twenty having been killed inside, though as many more probably fell beneath our fire in the depth of the forest. Indeed, some time after our occupation of Rangoon, it was a common thing, when traversing the adjacent jungle in search of game, to stumble upon skeletons or carcasses half devoured by jackals.

Our halt at this place did not exceed a few minutes, as it was merely an advanced work of the great Kimmendine stockade, whither the enemy had all fled. We were, therefore, soon again in motion, and, marching through the stockade, emerged from its other face, where a slope, tolerably free from jungle, gave us a view of our pathway on the opposite side, which, winding up the hill, was soon lost again in the dark recesses of the forest. This was the road to Kimmendine. We descended the slope, and crossed a small rivulet that flowed at its foot, in which one of the enemy was lying ; he had, doubtless, been mortally wounded in defending the stockade, and had fallen here, exhausted by

loss of blood. As the column was winding its way up the path before-mentioned, we were again startled by the report of a shot in front, and in a few minutes after a buzz ran through the ranks that Serjeant Morrison, of the light company, was killed ! His fate elicited much sympathy from his rough, but kind-hearted comrades, and no less from the officers, for he was a remarkably smart soldier, and on other accounts an especial favourite with all. Poor Morrison had been picked off by a vagabond secreted behind a clump of bamboos, at the distance of eight or ten yards. Up to this point his death was the most startling event of the day, he having been the first of our men killed since we landed, and the circumstance produced a corresponding sensation within the circle of his own corps.

We still moved on, passing to the right several unfinished stockades, now tenanted only by pariah dogs and poultry, (the occupants having hurried away at our approach); and after proceeding a mile or so from the last-mentioned place, a halt was sounded, and the men were ordered to pile arms and take some refreshment; for, though the space traversed was short, we had already been under arms from 5 till 12 a.m. Our frugal meal was soon despatched, consisting of a handful

of mouldy biscuit, and a morsel of hard ration beef—poor fare for fighting men! Officers and soldiers, however, all fared alike on such occasions, each carrying what he required for the day's consumption in his havresack. In a few minutes we again moved on, still through dense jungle, but we had not proceeded a mile from the halting-place, when the head of the column was checked by a rattling fire of musketry in front. Another halt was the immediate consequence, and we soon found that the object of our movement, the formidable stockade of Kim-mendine, was right a-head of us, constructed directly across the road, so that any further progress was impracticable till a passage could be forced.

The troops were now distributed in such open spots as were available, on either side of the road, to await further orders; for to have kept them in the pathway would have been only unnecessarily exposing them to the enemy's fire, which even amidst the bushes was sufficiently galling. My regiment was formed up in an open space to the right, at a distance of perhaps 150 or 200 yards from the stockade, from which, however, it was concealed by a succession of thick and lofty clumps of bamboo, so close together as to form

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quite a fence, excepting in one point, where an aperture were seen, communicating, as we now found, with the enemy's works. Their position has before been cursorily described as resting on the river, and containing a garrison of some 10,000 rabble soldiery. From the partial view we could now catch of it, evident marks of superiority were soon discernible, both as regarded its height and general construction, and the materials that composed it, to the stockade that had only an hour or two yielded to our prowess. Very few and very indistinct, however, were the glimpses we could catch of the place, so shrouded was it on all sides by dense and matted underwood. The ground on which it stood sloped gently towards the river, with which our left could almost communicate. In the rear there was a trifling rise, but the jungle was so thick that our right could not penetrate beyond a short distance. The direction of the place, however, could be tolerably well guessed at by the enemy's voices, to say nothing of their musket balls; whilst to the left the works stretched away nearly in a straight line for the river, with which their flank formed a right angle at a distance of 250 yards or so. On this face the ground was more open, there being space occasionally amidst

the tangled brushwood to admit of small bodies of men forming up. This was the side we first approached, and our operations, if I remember rightly, were mainly directed against its upper angle.

Immediately after our arrival before Kimmen-dine, we were joined by the other column, under Colonel Hodgson, that had marched by a different route, so that we now mustered 1,600 bayonets.

When we first came upon the place, a heavy fire was opened upon us of jingals and small arms, which, however, after a time ceased, excepting an occasional shot, to let us know they were on the *qui vive*. The enemy wisely reserved their ammunition, as indeed was often the case, for the hour of need. Whilst our corps was drawn up in the open space to the right before described we were commanded to order arms; and now were passed some anxious minutes, while the brigadier and staff were planning operations. It was soon determined to ply the enemy with Congreve rockets and shrapnell simultaneously from a point in the road to our left, which commanded the place, at the distance of perhaps 150 or 200 yards. In the meantime, our flank companies were ordered to move

through the aperture in the jungle before referred to, for the purpose of grappling with the enemy, and clearing the way for the column, for the nature of the ground would not admit of a larger body being brought into action. So soon as our flank companies had disappeared in the jungle, the guns opened their fire, though unfortunately the first rocket that was discharged exploded too soon, and destroyed an unhappy follower, who happened to be in the way.

The crack of fire-arms was now soon heard again in front, and though all that was going on was hidden from our view, we had audible proof of our people being warmly and closely engaged, whilst our own position was any thing but agreeable, for though exposed to the effect of the enemy's fire we could not retaliate without risking the lives of our friends in front; we were, therefore, obliged to "grin and bear it." Some twenty minutes might have passed, whilst we, *corps de reserve*, remained in this uneasy and inactive state. The few partial shots that at first were heard had increased to a regular and continued file fire, mingled with the yells of the enemy and the hurrahs of our own people. All this worked us up to a state of almost feverish excitement. At length some of our men were

seen emerging from the thick underwood, and we soon heard with pain that matters were not progressing as we could have wished. They told us that many had fallen inside, and that in the absence of scaling ladders (none had accompanied the column) it would be impossible to force an entrance. These men were mostly wounded. Some poor fellows were staggering back amongst their comrades, staunching their wounds as they best could, whilst others were borne past us; and as they were hurried along, a passing glance readily detected the glassy eye, the livid lip, and cold damp forehead, too truly indicative of death's near approach, if not actual presence. Amongst other gallant fellows there were two corporals of our grenadiers, Dun and O'Brien—one dead, the other dying; and even now I can recall the fine manly figure of the latter, as he reclined heavy and helpless in the arms of two comrades, his black bushy whiskers matted in gore from the death-wound he had received in his brow. Lennox, too, our drum-major, a fine handsome fellow, was also killed in vainly striving to force himself through a narrow aperture into the enemy's works. Whilst the fate of some of our leading men naturally excited our peculiar attention, there was no lack

of humble privates amongst the fallen to share our sympathy, for it was evident the “lamb” were destined in their *début* in the campaign to bleed freely. As these poor fellows passed us, it was curious to witness the eagerness manifested by the survivors to obtain from their pouches the ammunition *they* could no longer handle; this was literally scrambled for by the living, and in truth just then it was a matter of no little value.

At this juncture, a party of us, under Captain Cursham, who afterwards fell so gallantly before Sittang, was detached to reconnoitre the place to the left, in order to ascertain if in any other point in that direction there was a better hope of assailing the works with success. We looked as clearly into it as the tangled nature of the under-wood would allow, drawing upon us several shots of the enemy; but in the absence of scaling ladders there was no part that could possibly be assailed with any fair hope of getting access to the interior, and of this the brigadier was soon satisfied. In the meantime our casualties were rapidly increasing, but all in vain; the obstacle was as unyielding as ever, though every effort that physical strength and courage could make had been applied in endeavours to tear down a portion of the palisades, the height and strength

of which far exceeded anything we had looked for, and in these efforts a considerable portion of the assailants had fallen. Unpleasant reports now spread like wildfire that a retreat was in contemplation. They were soon found to be too true, and great was the disappointment thereby occasioned. The bright hopes we had in the morning cherished were now clouded. To hear a retreat talked of was truly a damper. Of such a movement, however, the most sanguine amongst us could not deny the necessity—at all events till the construction of scaling ladders (which, by the way, might have been made by the pioneers in half an hour) would enable us to renew the attack with a tolerable certainty of success. Of troops we had abundance, able, and willing enough to fall in the attempt; but it was clear that numbers could in the present case avail nothing. How the force happened to be unprovided with scaling ladders I cannot say; the fault, if any, must rest, I conceive, with the superintending engineer, and even he could not be much blamed, for, as scaling ladders are a munition of war seldom called for except in a regular siege, and as the Burmese works hitherto attacked had been easily forced, being either mere breast-works, or lightly constructed, the

engineer could, perhaps, hardly have anticipated such an emergency.

The retreat was now sounded by the bugles, on all sides, in right earnest, and great was the commotion that followed. As the troops drew off, the enemy blazed at us with redoubled energy, and the savage yells that accompanied the whistling of their shot were, as may be well supposed, the very reverse of inspiring. "*C'était une belle affaire pour les Anglais,*" said a French officer to me once with reference to Waterloo, where he had fought: in the same sense, it may be said that this was "*une belle affaire*" for the Burmese.

Just as we were beginning to move off the ground, confused and crest-fallen, a thundering cannonade was heard in the direction of the river, on the reverse side of the stockade, and grape and round shot now rattled about us in a manner highly creditable to the hands that plied them, however unmusical to our ears. They swept through the underwood and cut away the huge branches of the trees overhead, in a truly terrific manner, and had their course been a trifle lower, the slaughter must have been very great. As it was, several men fell, and this, as we soon found, from our own guns! For it

seemed the water column had come up just as we were drawing off, and, from some misconception or other, the shot that was intended for the foe was now scattering our ranks. My friend Cursham's gallant spirit was so indignant at the very idea of a retreat that, when all the troops were moving off, it was some time before he could be prevailed upon to leave the place, seating himself on a mound within range of the enemy's shot! Being in his company, I remained with him, but we soon yielded to necessity, and set in with the current.

Though the main body of the troops moved off in very tolerable order, there could not, under such circumstances, be otherwise than some degree of confusion, for, from the nature of the ground, having of necessity been scattered about in parties, they had now to thread their way as they best could through the jungle, to find the narrow crowded road upon which the column had to form, and which did not admit of more than three abreast. Upon this, then, they were now pouring from all points, under a pitiless cannonade from our own guns, as well as from the enemy's. On the other hand, the cries of the wounded, the shoutings of men who had lost their way, the furious gallop of loose horses,

the bodies of the fallen scattered on all sides, the whistling of the musket and the rushing of the cannon balls, the stunning report of the artillery, and the savage yell of triumph from the enemy, altogether formed a combination of sights and sounds that will not be readily forgotten by those who were present on that occasion. Amongst the *contre-temps* of the morning, I must not omit to mention that a native corps stationed somewhere in our rear, but quite concealed from view, opened a heavy fire upon us, which, of course, our lads lost no time in returning, each mistaking the other for the enemy!

As we left the ground, Cursham and I for a short time lost our way, and our attention being roused by the cries of a wounded sepoy, who had been overlooked, we were afforded an opportunity of saving the poor fellow, for we conveyed him in safety to the column, which, after a little meandering among the bamboo bushes and long grass, we rejoined.

On regaining the stockade we had captured in the morning, the troops rested for an hour or so, and long before sunset we re-entered Rangoon, weary and hungry, and pretty considerably begrimed with mud, blood and gunpowder. About 120 men were killed and wounded during

the morning's operations, of which nearly fifty, and two officers, Captain Kyd and Lieutenant Stinton, were of the Madras European Regiment. The officers and twenty-five of the casualties occurred in the grenadier company of the regiment, whose dauntless bearing upon this trying occasion was highly spoken of. A private of this company, an incorrigible scamp, but a most daring soldier, and moreover a capital shot, on this day brought down one of the enemy that was secreted in a tree. They were very expert in climbing trees, and constantly had recourse to this method for watching our movements. Lieutenant Stinton had received a very severe wound through the fleshy part of the thigh, but he nevertheless insisted upon marching back on foot rather than deprive a humble comrade of the comfort of a dooly.

Thus terminated our first attack upon Kim-mendine, in a way that never could have been anticipated by the most desponding amongst us. The result was doubtless a source of considerable mortification to all ; but we had the satisfaction of feeling that no troops could have behaved more steadily, for throughout there had been no flinching, and of knowing that the want of scaling ladders alone was the cause of our re-

verse. We must have been about an hour before the place, and during that period every effort had been made to tear down some of the palisades by manual force. These daring attempts, however, cost too dearly, and were utterly powerless against such strongly-constructed works. *Experientia docet*, and henceforth no troops marched against a stockade, without a due proportion of scaling-ladders.

CHAP. III.

CAPTURE OF KIMMENDINE.—ADVENTURE ON
PICKET.

Whilst it is not the object of these sketches to give a connected narrative of the events of the war, it would seem hardly fair to the reader of the last number, detailing the attack upon Kimmendine, to leave him in ignorance of the result of that affair, as a speedy and spirited effort to recover our lost laurels would of course be assumed. Such in truth was the case, and I shall now give a cursory sketch of the further operations.

The failure, occurring as it did almost at the opening of the campaign, was of course looked upon at the time as rather an “untoward” affair,

for, while it gave the enemy confidence, it was calculated to dishearten the native portion of our force, whose nerves are not of the same iron structure as those of their European brethren, and this, I think, may be admitted, without any disparagement to the general military qualifications of our sepoys. To compare them with Europeans (as I have heard some men do) would be absurd; suffice it to say, they are very respectable troops, and equal to any demands that our position in India is likely to require of them. For the above reason especially, no time was lost in arranging a second attack upon Kim-mendine; and, upon this occasion, to "make assurance doubly sure," five 18-pounders, besides several heavy howitzers and mortars, were to accompany the troops destined to act against the place, amounting to between three and four thousand men. The heavy ordnance had to be landed from the ships, and, this process being tedious, it was not until the morning of the 10th June that the contemplated movement was made. Long 18-pounders and mortars in proportion are cumbersome affairs enough when drawn by cattle on good roads; but when, as in the instance before us, they had to be hauled to their destination by sheer manual labour, through

mud and mire, over the villanous highways of barbarous Burmah, it may readily be conceived what a drag they must have been on the movement of the column. In the total absence of any sort of draft cattle (no animals save the horses of field and staff officers having accompanied the expedition,) two or three regiments of infantry were harnessed to the guns, and though the distance to be traversed did not exceed five or six miles, the best part of the day was consumed in thus dragging our artillery to the point of attack.

The principal road connecting Kimmendine with Rangoon ran parallel to, and within a short distance of, the river. On its right was a dense forest, whilst on the left were open tracts, partially cultivated, varied by patches of swamp overgrown with low shrubs and brushwood. This road was altogether to the left of the one previously travelled, and was selected in the present case as better adapted for the guns, to say nothing of a mushroom of a stockade, that had started up within a few days, and which was to be taken, as a matter of course, *en route*. On reaching this point (which the column did not do till nine o'clock, though they got under arms at three A.M.!), the stockade was breached by the

18-pounders, and speedily carried by assault, parties of H.M.'s 13th, 38th, 41st and the Madras European Regt. sharing in the honour. The latter was upon this occasion headed by Captain Kitson, then doing duty with the corps, whose gallantry was specially noticed in the day's Orders by the Chief. One hundred and forty of the enemy were counted dead in the place, whilst our loss did not exceed two officers and thirty men killed and wounded: of these, we had one officer, Lieut. Robertson, dangerously wounded, and ten men killed and wounded. He had received a musket-ball in the thigh, which cracked the bone through the whole joint; mortification consequently ensued, and he died a few days after. We were all sorry to lose Robertson, or *Clan*, as we called him, for, being a genuine Highlander, he soon acquired this cognomen from his attachment to, and display of, those little harmless nationalities which, probably, are more strictly observed abroad, if possible, than in the Land of Cakes itself. *Clan* was in all respects a thorough Highlander, both physically and morally, for, whilst he had most of the personal characteristics of his countrymen, such as a broad pair of shoulders, high cheek-bones and large bushy whiskers, (somewhat of an au-

burn tinge,) he had a heart of the true Highland mould. When *Clan Robertson* fell, we had no more Gaelic songs at the mess, with one of which he always favoured us upon public occasions (such as a mess dinner-party); and, though not very comprehensible to us Lowlanders, they were always sufficiently exhilarating when accompanied with a due proportion of thumping of tables and rattling of glasses.

This affair being consummated, the column moved on to Kimmendine, which was hardly a mile distant. There was no time, however, for attacking it that night, so much delay had been occasioned by the tedious progress of the artillery; the little daylight therefore that remained was occupied in getting the guns into position and investing the place with the troops, so as, if practicable, to prevent the escape of the garrison. A flotilla of gun-boats watched the river face, whilst the military endeavoured to complete the cordon on the land side; but unfortunately a link was wanting, for, owing to some cause or other, there was an extent of at least 150 yards between our right and the river, on the north face, left unguarded, and this afforded the vagabonds an opportunity of slipping through our fingers, of which they readily availed them-

selves. The night was, of course, passed by the troops, "*sub Jove frigido*," or, perhaps, "*sub Jove humido*" would be more applicable, for the rain poured down upon them by bucketful the whole time, whilst there was abundance of occupation for all hands in throwing up entrenchments and forming batteries, so as to enable the guns to open upon the devoted place by daybreak, and at the distance of only 100 or 150 yards, for the thick nature of the jungle afforded us every facility for making our approaches. What with shouting, yelling, thunder, lightning, and rain, interspersed occasionally with a sprinkling of musketry from either party, the night was a comfortless one enough, though unattended by any serious loss of life, for the enemy, as the result proved, were too intent upon packing up their goods and chattels to spare much time for annoying us. With the first streak of dawn, our batteries opened.

The nimble gunner

With linstock now the devilish cannon touches;—

and blaze away in truth they did, with shot and shell, most lustily for a couple of hours; but this time it was "*vox et præterea nihil*," for, on the troops advancing to the assault, not a shot was returned from the place, which was soon dis

covered to be empty, and it appeared that the enemy had evacuated it long before the batteries had opened, by means of the unguarded space before referred to! How such a mass of men (for they must have numbered at least 10,000) could have escaped the vigilance of the sentries on our right, as well as the boats on the river, was a source of astonishment to all; but, in such matters, a barbarous foe will beat a civilized opponent hollow.

I heard that the first man who entered the place was an Irishman, who, after looking about him from the top of the stockade, exclaimed in a rich brogue to his disappointed comrades, "There is nobody in here at all, at all!" This was, however, not strictly the case, as we certainly had the honour of capturing an old woman; but not a man was there, either dead or alive, killed or wounded. The destructive power of our iron missiles, however, was sufficiently apparent in every direction: the burst of the shells as they fell to the ground, had committed sad havoc, and broken up its surface in an extraordinary manner. The effect of our cannon balls was not so visible, owing to the elasticity of the bamboo material, of which most of the houses, as well as the stockade itself, were

constructed, the fibres of the wood merely expanding on the passage of the shot, and immediately after resuming their original position. Indeed, the breach in the stockade was very imperfectly affected from this cause, formidable as were the means at our disposal. Bombarding, or "shelling" them, as we called it, was all well enough; but after this experiment we seldom had recourse to guns for breaching a stockade when constructed of bamboo.

Kimmendine being now in our possession, a detachment of my regiment and a native corps being left to garrison it, the troops returned to Rangoon.

Though the easy manner in which we acquired this post disappointed the expectations of all lovers of glory, it was, nevertheless, a conquest of no little importance, for previously we had not an inch of ground we could call our own beyond the chain of sentries that encircled our position at Rangoon. It proved, indeed, of vast utility during the war, and remained in our keeping till we evacuated the country in 1826, though a desperate effort was made by the enemy to recover the stockade in December, 1824, when 8,000 of them besieged it for a week. Its gal

lant defence, upon that occasion, by the garrison, consisting of 140 of the Madras European Regt. and the 26th Madras Native Infantry, under Major Yates, has secured for this obscure spot an imperishable record in the annals of British India, and the word "*Kimmendine*" is now read in letters of gold on the colours and appointment of the latter corps. This honour, however, was very unjustly withheld from the detachment of the Madras European Regt. on the absurd plea of its not being the head-quarters, though at the time it numbered half the effective men of the corps!

It must be confessed that public opinion at the time was very unfavourable to the plan of operations against Kimmendine, which could most assuredly have been easily carried by assault on the same evening if the attack had been ordered when the troops were full of confidence and flushed with the conquest of the morning, for in this instance there was no lack of scaling-ladders; whereas 185 shells (expensive affairs, by-the-bye), besides round shot *ad infinitum*, were expended upon an empty stockade, while the severe exposure of the troops to the heavy rains during the night had no doubt a most injurious effect upon

the health of all concerned, for the damp midnight vapours of a tropical forest are not to be inhaled with impunity.

On the 1st of July, not very long subsequent to the above period, an adventure of some interest befel me, whilst in the command of an outlying picket of my regiment, consisting of fifty men, which nearly deprived John Company of at least a zealous, if not a very experienced, officer. Such an event requires to be given in all its details, but, for the better understanding of the relative localities, a sketch of the position of the British army at Rangoon will not be here out of place. Its general outline may be described as a isosceles triangle in shape, of which the stockaded town on the river formed the base, whilst the great pagoda of Shoe Dagon was its apex, or salient angle. The sides of the triangle were formed by the two high roads leading from the opposite extremities of the town, and uniting at the said angle, which formed an admirable *point d'appui* for our position. On these two lines the troops were distributed, the Bengal division for the most part occupying the right line, and the Madras division, under Brigadier-General McBean, the left. A regiment of native infantry formed the garrison of the stock-

ade, whilst to a part of H.M.'s 38th was entrusted the safe keeping of the pagoda, this being in fact the key of the whole position. The lines must have been altogether six miles in extent, and, either road being thickly lined with houses emptied of their proper occupants, the troops were abundantly supplied with shelter, without having recourse to canvass. The right of our position, or Bengal lines, as we distinguished it, was altogether more open and elevated than our left, and consequently better adapted for defence. There were, moreover, many pagodas and irregularities throughout its face, that in event of an attack could be turned to good account, and these advantages were enhanced by the low walls, breast-high, which frequently form a square about these pagodas. In such spots pickets were of course posted, and guns placed in position. Our left, on the contrary, was literally enveloped in jungle through its whole length, offering facilities of annoyance to our wily foe, of which they were by no means slow in availing themselves. When we first established ourselves, the outlying pickets could not on any point mount with safety till the pioneers had cleared the way for them, by cutting down the jungle; and as it was, so rapid and

Woodley Lith.

Jauntion.

OUTLYING PICKET OF 1ST MADRAS EUROPEAN REGT AT RANGOON

luxuriant is the vegetation in this climate during the prevalence of the monsoon, the grass and shrubs in a few days were as high and inconvenient as ever.

Picket duty is at all times of an arduous nature, but at Rangoon, from the peculiarities of the service, it proved to be unusually harassing; for what with wet clothes, a scanty and very precarious supply of food, false alarms, and sometimes real ones, and, lastly, those abominable musquitoes, which are only met with in full vigour and perfection amid the luxuriant and dank foliage of the jungle, every sub., smoking his solitary cigar under such circumstances, did not perhaps find the life of a soldier to be altogether that—

Very merry
Hey down derry
Sort of life enough,

which the song declares it to be.

As before stated, on the 1st of July, being only an ensign, I was in command of an outlying picket of the Madras European Regt. The corps was cantoned about the centre of the left of the position, and might be said, in military parlance, to form the left centre. The picket occupied tents at the distance of about three hundred yards from the lines, with which it was

connected by a sort of lane running in a straight line, and flanked by hedges of bamboo. The spot on which the tents were pitched was comparatively open, and its vicinity had been rendered so likewise by the activity of that admirable old corps, the *Madras pioneers*, since metamorphosed into *sappers and miners*. Nevertheless in the distance the jungle flourished in all its glory, and though a good deal reduced in our immediate neighbourhood sufficient underwood and patches of jungle remained to render a sharp look-out as essential by day as by night. Sentries were of course posted at the usual intervals in our front, communicating on either flank with those of other pickets. These sentries at night were doubled.

Shooting at any kind of game, except the enemy, had been strictly interdicted for obvious reasons; but in those hard times, when salt fish and rancid pork had usurped the place of beef and mutton, the temptation that was offered, while on picket, of getting a mouthful of fresh meat, was beyond my powers of resistance, although at the risk of a *wig* in G.O., or even a court-martial, with all its terrors. The temptation came in the shape of doves, which abounded on every side; they were excellent eating, and,

though a shy bird, it was not difficult to bag a sufficient number for a grill or a curry. In fact, being somewhat of a keen sportsman, I seldom mounted picket without having my gun at hand. Upon the occasion in question, I had set my heart upon a dinner of grilled doves, and with this in view I took my gun and penetrated, accompanied by a servant (a maty boy—a sub.'s maty on the Madras side of India is an animal *sui generis*—a man of all work, unknown, I believe, at the sister presidencies), into the jungle for some distance, in front of my own sentries. It was, doubtless, an unwise act to venture so far from my post, for the enemy were ever skulking about the outskirts of the camp, like cats, ready to pounce upon any of us *wild foreigners* (so they called us in their official documents) who happened to be out of bounds. I had, however, been led a longer dance by the doves than I had intended, for they were confoundedly shy that day. Still, I had bagged two or three, and had just knocked another off his perch, and was proceeding to pick him up, when my ear caught the sound of a drum in the direction of the lines of the regiment. I immediately looked at my watch, and finding it was nearly one o'clock I at once concluded that it

was merely the men's dinner-call, which was always beat at that hour. At ease on this score, I proceeded, but two or three minutes had scarcely elapsed when this sound was followed up by one of less doubtful signification, for a rattling fire of musketry was now but too audible, in the direction of the "Bengal lines," at the distance perhaps of two miles, which was soon followed up by the report of cannon at longer intervals. For a moment I listened "*arrectis auribus* ;" but no time was now to be lost, for I at once concluded that the enemy had been saucy enough to attack our position to the right, whilst I, entrusted with the duty of guarding at least a portion of it, was amusing myself in the jungle! Leaving the doves, therefore, at full liberty, I went to the right-about, for being nearly half a mile from my picket, and much cover intervening, it instantly occurred to me as possible that my escape might be cut off should the enemy be in this neighbourhood also. Stimulated by this apprehension, as well as by the idea of the serious consequences that might ensue should the picket, in my absence, be attacked, I scampered back as fast as my legs would carry me, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing through the foliage in the distance my red-

coated sentinels at their proper posts, which they now evidently paced with more than usual vigilance, their ears being of course as much startled as my own at all these martial sounds, for never yet had the enemy had the audacity to attack us by broad daylight, and they were all proportionably on the *qui vive*. A few minutes more and the sentries were passed, and the tents of the picket regained in safety. All these, of course, had been very anxious for my return, and now there was much speculation as to the cause of the firing, for it still continued, though at intervals, and without increasing.

Strict orders were immediately issued to the sentries to keep a sharp look-out, and every eye was now turned towards the jungle in our front and flank, in full expectation of a visit from the foe—an event we all now looked to with great pleasure, so confident did we feel of our ability to beat ten times our number. Five minutes had scarcely elapsed, after I had returned to my post, and I had entered the tent to exchange my fowling-piece for my sword, when a shot was fired in front, and apparently by one of the sentries! At the same moment a serjeant came running into the tent and reported that the enemy were approaching and were driving in the advanced

sentries, which report was corroborated by several more musket-shots, following each other in quick succession, which my ear readily detected to be hostile, as well by the sound as the direction ; for, from the loose and imperfect manner in which they were charged, the ordnance and fire-arms of the Burmese never went off with the same smart report as our own. The difference, therefore, from this cause was ever easily distinguishable. "Alert!" was now the word ; out I rushed, calling out to the men to "fall in," which was soon done, their firelocks being ever ready piled, and in a twinkling the picket was formed up across the road that communicated with the lines, all eager for the fray, whilst our little drummer was directed to beat "the alarm" with all his might, so as to bring the regiment from the rear to our succour, in case the enemy might be in force.

We were all now prepared for any emergency, and I at once took a survey of matters in front. The first object that caught my eye was one of the sentries retreating and firing before several of the enemy, with as much steadiness and *sang-froid* as if he had been practising light infantry manœuvres on the parade ground ! At the moment I saw him he had delivered his

fire, and was in the act of ramming down a ball-cartridge to take another shot at his opponent before falling back upon the picket. To an old and experienced campaigner there would probably have appeared nothing worthy of observation in the man's movements, admirable as they nevertheless were; but I was much struck at the time by his cool and courageous bearing, so characteristic as it was of the true British soldier. As before stated, the ground on which the picket stood, as well as that in its immediate vicinity, was tolerably open, the trees and underwood having been cleared away, with great labour, and this operation had been extended through the whole length of our left face; the surface, however, was still not deficient in stunted shrubs, patches of long grass, and trunks of trees, which could be turned to good account by light infantry of either side. In our front, at the distance of about 150 yards, were the remains of a very thick and lofty hedge of bamboo, the greatest portion having been cut down to the right and left, and in the centre leaving a portion to form a sort of protection to the picket. On either flank of this hedge, as well as in the gap in its centre, sentries were posted, making four or five in all; these were now driven in. At the first

glance I took but few of the enemy were discernible ; their numbers, however, were sufficiently indicated by the report of their firearms, and in a minute or two the bobbing of heads and puffs of smoke behind almost every bush or tuft of grass, in front and flank, showed us the place was quite alive with them, as if by magic. I ascended a small mound on the left of the picket to get a distinct view of matters, but without success ; the enemy, however, did not lose the opportunity of sending half a dozen shots in that direction for my express benefit, all of which luckily missed their mark. This mode of attack was altogether unsatisfactory, and quite disappointed our expectations. We had fondly hoped that they would have come upon us *en masse*, so as to have shewn us something tangible whereon to try the temper of our bayonets ; on the contrary, they had scattered themselves in every direction, taking advantage of such cover as the ground offered, from which they blazed away at us ; our efforts, therefore, were limited to keeping them in check (for the fellows were as active as squirrels, and shewed themselves as much on our flanks as in front), which we managed to do by advancing the picket a few paces, and returning their fire as

quickly as possible. To have dashed forward with the whole picket would have been a useless as well as dangerous experiment, for, in the first place, scattered as the enemy were, there was really nothing to charge, and, secondly, had even a opportunity offered, there might have been serious risk in quitting our position, for I was quite ignorant of the number of my opponents, and an advanced movement on my part would have enabled them by a vigorous effort to out-flank me, get in our rear, and throw the lines into confusion, in the twinkling of an eye. In fact, pickets are always cautioned not to commit themselves by any forward movements, their duty, in the event of an attack, being simply to hold their ground till the troops are enabled to come up to their relief. Nothing but danger of annihilation would seem to justify a picket's retreating from its post.

Perhaps ten minutes might have elapsed from the time we were attacked till the arrival of the corps from the rear, during which we had exchanged a desultory fire with our enemy; the report of this, in addition to the ominous beat of our drum, had produced a corresponding sensation far and near throughout the lines, for on all sides we could now hear the beat of the

Long Roll, and sound of the *General Assembly*. While thus anxiously engaged there was a cry of "here comes the regiment!" and truly a gay and gallant sight it was, as the corps first appeared in the distance, its scarlet clothing and glittering bayonets beautifully contrasting with the dark green foliage that overhung them, whilst the effect was heightened by the sun's rays. On came the gallant "Lambs" (for it was my own corps, the 1st Madras European Regiment), formed in open column of sections, with trailed arms, and in double time. They soon reached the picket, and without slackening their pace passed on, deploying into line in our front. Upon communicating to the colonel what little I knew as to the force and intentions of the enemy, I was directed to stand fast, for a superior force having moved to the front, the tables were now turned, and our *advanced picket* had become a *rear guard* for the time being. As before said, there had been a good deal of firing between my picket and the enemy's skirmishers previous to the arrival of the corps, but with little loss, though the enemy were thereby driven to a greater distance, whither I could not venture to follow them, and it was as well, for we soon learned

that heavy columns were waiting the issue of the attack on the right of the position, being close at hand, though concealed by the forest. Having been thus cheated of an opportunity of fairly coping with the foe on this occasion, I cared but little now in throwing the responsibility on older and abler shoulders, for I was the youngest officer in the corps being then only eighteen; and to be thus attacked on picket, and entrusted with the defence of a very important part of our position, was rather a startling matter, honourable doubtless as the duty was.

“*Mais revenons à nos moutons,*” a phrase, by the way, singularly appropriate to “The Lambs.” The corps, having formed in line, advanced to some distance in front, penetrating the outskirts of the jungle. Such an array was too formidable for the foe to think of opposing on a fair field, and all vestiges of them soon disappeared before it; they quickly regained their favourite haunts in the jungle, after exchanging a few random shots with our light bobs. The ground was now cleared, and the picket being strengthened in event of a night attack, the corps returned to its quarters. The night, however, passed off quietly, though we fully expected to have had a second edition of the morning work.

Though neither side had been niggardly in the expenditure of their ammunition in this "*petite affaire*," there was but little loss of life, at least on this side of the lines; one man of my company was killed, whilst a few of the enemy also suffered. As our regiment advanced in line, one unlucky fellow got entangled in the bamboo hedge before alluded to, where C——, of ours, spitted him without ceremony, probably after receiving his fire. He had been kicked up like a hare from behind a bush or tuft of grass (tufts of grass are of more luxuriant growth in tropical countries than in our cold clime), and having in his eagerness to escape missed the opening, he bolted into the thick part of the hedge, where C—— sheathed his sword in him! I do not say, be it observed, that the man met his death unfairly in this instance; but I write it with sorrow, that human life was taken but too little account of by too many amongst us during the operations in Ava. Prisoners were seldom made, and *quarter*, it is to be feared, was not so generally bestowed as in European warfare. But the fault was extenuated by the barbarous nature of our enemies, who, so far from expecting mercy, would often, when lying wounded and helpless, exhaust their remaining strength to take another shot at us, thus irritating our soldiery beyond all

powers of endurance. Indeed, a prolonged warfare with barbarous tribes cannot but have an injurious effect on the morals and discipline of organized troops. So little did the Burmese understand our character, or appreciate our disposition to alleviate their sufferings, that upon one occasion, the surgeon having amputated the shattered arm of a Burman soldier, the poor fellow, as a matter of course, held out the other, to undergo a similar operation, supposing it to be our usual method of torturing prisoners!

It now only remains to explain what had caused the firing on the right of our position, which had at first so startled us. The ground in front of this face has been before described as more uneven and open than that on our left, though large patches of jungle, here and there, afforded ample cover for the enemy to conceal from us any attempt they might meditate upon our lines. The Puzendown creek, at the mouth of which was the confluence of the Rangoon and Pegue rivers, ran for a short distance nearly parallel with our position, the village of Puzendown being occupied by us as a post, and forming our extreme right. Far to the left, commenced the dense mass of jungle, which, nearly encircling the Dagon Pagoda, stretched away to the west-

ward as far as Kimmendine. It was about mid-day when the enemy, formed in two or three columns, amounting to at least 3,000 or 4,000 men, were seen moving rapidly towards our position, covered by a cloud of skirmishers. Their first effort was against the village of Puzendown, having set fire to which, they commenced a spirited attack upon a portion of our lines, for, by a bold movement, they had contrived to pass our pickets. Here, however, they were warmly received by the 43rd Madras Native Infantry (one of the best corps in the service, by the way), who charged them most gallantly and soon drove them back in disorder, aided by a few discharges of grape and shrapnell from a neighbouring battery. Seventy of the enemy were killed, whilst our loss was little or nothing. This attack having failed, they were deterred from shewing themselves boldly on our left.

So much for the hostile movement against the British position at Rangoon on the 1st July, 1824, the trifling details of which, as far as they relate to myself, are remembered by me even at this distant day with peculiar interest, and perhaps at a still more distant one I may continue to say, "*Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*"

CHAP. IV.

SCARCITY OF PROVISIONS, PREVALENCE OF
SICKNESS, &C.

In England I have frequently heard the *Burmese war* spoken of as the *Rangoon war*, by people not well informed on the subject; upon consideration, however, the designation does not seem inapt, for most certain it is, unusual as the circumstance may be, and strange as it may sound to the ears of those who have never heard much of our campaigns in Ava, that by far the best part of the fighting, and the most stirring events of the war, took place in and about Rangoon, the modern capital of the province of Pegue. The fact is, at the opening of the war, or rather during the first ten months, the British army, though amounting to ten thousand men, was, from the almost total

want of land and water-carriage, utterly incapable of moving into the interior. This necessarily inactive state of our troops naturally gave the enemy confidence, and though they so speedily evacuated the town on our first approach, the wreaths of smoke that were soon perceptible on several points in the surrounding jungle, with other symptoms not to be mistaken, indicated that the favourite process of stockading was in active operation, and that teak and bamboo were now in full requisition for obstructing our progress whenever an advance might be attempted.

It has ever occurred to me, that two grievous errors were committed respecting the expedition to Rangoon, to which combined, we may, I think, mainly attribute the heavy loss of life from disease and other serious inconveniences which shewed themselves so early in the campaign. The errors I conceive to have been these: the having commenced active operations against an unaccustomed enemy, whom we ought well to have known was only to be grappled with effectually within the stockaded strongholds of his own tangled and impracticable jungle, at the precise period when the rainy season of six months' duration sets in, which it generally does about the first week in May, so regular are the

seasons in these latitudes. It will be remembered that Rangoon was captured by the British on the 11th of May. The other grand mistake consisted in the full reliance placed on the cordial co-operation of the Peguers, for assisting us, not only with provisions, but with land and water carriage for a forward movement. In all this we reckoned, as the result proved, without our host, somewhat after the manner of Napoleon at Moscow; and though the consequences were not so fatal, the disappointment of our ill-grounded calculations indirectly entailed a loss of valuable life, and an expenditure of treasure which, even at this distant day, is not, I suspect, unfelt by our Indian exchequer, for the Burmese war is generally believed to have cost the East India Company from ten to twelve millions sterling, to which we may add, at a rough calculation, fifteen thousand men, for a less number would hardly cover our losses from disease and the sword during this arduous service. So costly is the kingly game of war! This may not, perhaps, by some be considered the place for enlarging on such points; I will, therefore, simply observe that, had a suitable number of boats, adapted for river navigation, been provided, and able boatmen in proportion,

a flotilla, under the auspices of the *Diana* steamer (the only one then in India), might have transported four or five thousand red-coats to Ava within a few months of the landing of the expedition, thus bringing matters to an issue at once. Such a measure as this would surely have shortened the war by at least a twelve-month; for, after all, there is nothing like knocking at the gate of the capital by a bold movement, which may generally be done where there is water communication. From the total want, however, of the means of moving a sufficient force, either by land or water, upon our first occupation of the country, we could not, as has been before shewn, proceed a day's march beyond Rangoon, and whenever a gun or two was requisite for battering a stockade, it could only be transported by manual labour.

The population of Rangoon was about forty thousand, the whole of which had been compelled by the Burmese authorities to quit the town at our approach, and take up their residence in the jungle or distant villages; and, without doubt, no measure was better adapted for paralyzing all our efforts. From the absence of the inhabitants of course there was no market; so that, for the supply of every want, we were

wholly dependent upon the shipping and the unpalatable fare of the commissariat, who were soon completely at a *non plus*, for having fully reckoned upon an unfailing supply of bullocks and buffaloes from the rich pastures of Pegue for keeping us Anglo-Indian soldiers in good fighting condition, they had brought with them from India but a scanty store of provisions, and this in mould, weevils, maggots, &c., bore evident symptoms of a good old age. When hard beef and rancid pork were on the wane, our diet was varied on alternate days with salt fish, whilst rice was substituted for biscuits, and so bad at times have I known the fish to be that I have seen a heap of it that had been served out for my company condemned forthwith by a committee as unserviceable, or rather *uneatable*. But "*Optimum condimentum est fames*," says the Latin proverb, and the truth of it was never more fully proved than by us *Rangooners*, for as there was abundance of work found us, which of course had the usual effect of giving a keener edge to the appetite, we very soon adapted ourselves to circumstances, and were glad of any thing edible, come in what shape it would. The worst of the matter, however, was, that *quantity* did not compensate for *quality*.

During Indian campaigning generally, so abundant are all those *animal productions* (such as beef, mutton, poultry, milk, butter, eggs,) which are requisite for the table of Europeans, that for officers to be victualled by the commissary had hitherto been an unusual, if not an unheard of, occurrence. All the aforesaid supplies could in general be obtained with facility by the domestics from the adjacent villages, of which there was seldom any lack in the densely-populated region of *India intra Gangem*, which may truly be said in regard to its productiveness to be a "land flowing with milk and honey," always excepting a season of drought, with its awful effects, to which the clime renders it liable. Matters now, however, were different, and we were campaigning in a part of *India ultra Gangem*, whither we had been transported by sea, totally dissimilar to any thing we had been accustomed to. Burmah is very thinly inhabited, unlike most Indian nations, and this is attributed to its pugnacious propensities, from time immemorial, embroiling it in long and bloody wars with the Chinese and Peguers. The population, about five millions, is mostly located on, or within a short distance of, the numerous rivers and creeks with which the country abounds, and

to such tracts cultivation seemed limited, leaving the interior, for the most part a luxuriant wilderness, in the undisputed possession of elephants, tigers, buffaloes, antelopes, "*et hoc genus omne.*" Of sheep the country produces none, though cattle, especially buffaloes, are abundant. The aforesaid reasons show the difficulty to be encountered in moving troops through the country; but the circumstance of Rangoon and its vicinity having been literally swept of all that could be converted into European fare rendered it necessary to serve out rations to the officers, as well as to the men, soon after landing. It was considered, however, an indulgence, and we had moreover the privilege of paying for it three times as much as the men, though of course we all shared alike. At first the rations were *very* inferior and *very* scanty, in no way to be compared to those served out in men-of-war. I never remember to have heard of, much less to have seen, any of those luxuries which H.M. seamen enjoy, such as cocoa, coffee, sugar, raisins, &c., &c. The fact is, we were rather *scurvily* treated with respect to diet, and this *literally*, not *figuratively*, as the inveterate scurvy, which soon broke out amongst us, can testify.

My regiment brought with it from India a full mess establishment of butchers, bakers, cooks, &c.; but their occupation was soon almost a dead letter, for where there is no market, there can be no mess, and though every effort was made to keep up our social meetings at the mess-table, even to foraging in the jungle for such of the vegetable tribe as might supply the place of greens, it was found to be such uphill work that 'ere a month had elapsed the mess was broken up *nem. con.*, till matters took a more favourable turn. Well can I recall the scrambling scene that took place as soon as the dishes—which, however, were “few and far between”—appeared on the tables! Ceremony was out of the question, hunger now ruled the roast, and the longest and the strongest arm carried the day! The viands had scarcely touched the board when there was a simultaneous rush towards the centre, a charge with forks into the very dishes, and the affair was over! This unequal distribution of the loaves and fishes, however, could not last; the operations of the mess were consequently suspended, and we broke up into small parties of twos and threes, to keep the pot boiling as we best could. Ingenuity was now ever upon the

stretch to add to the scanty meal, and experiments were tried, by the most enterprising amongst us in gastronomy, upon such of the animal tribe within our reach as promised nutrition without being detrimental. W——, of ours, exerted his skill upon a squirrel, which animals are plentiful in most parts of the East; this he roasted and ate, and declared to be very palatable: whether he continued to feast upon them I cannot remember. Paddy-birds (so called from their frequenting the rice or paddy-fields,) a kind of stork, were now in full requisition for curries, disguised in which shape they were greedily devoured, though in India we had ever considered them as unfit for food as a crow or kite. There was a kind of pulse, called *dhall*, served out to us occasionally by the commissariat, which was a course substitute for peas; and of this, with the addition of some ration beef or pork, we made an inferior soup, which, if it did not nourish us much, had the effect of filling us out most effectually.

When the mess was broken up, I joined forces with two other officers, who occupied the same quarters with me, and now every morning at a certain hour was seen my servant returning

from the commissariat stores with the regular quantum of salt meat generally dangling to a string, the biscuit in a towel (a dirty one, of course,) and two drams, *alias* wine-glasses, of arrack, in a quart bottle. Thus we all fared, with little variation, for the first six or eight months: salt meat boiled, salt meat fried, salt meat curried, with hams and tongues from the shipping, at an enormous price, *usque ad nauseam*. Indeed for a long period after the war I had almost an antipathy to ham, after the surfeit we had of pork in every shape at Rangoon. As regards liquors, however, we were not altogether at first starting badly off, having brought a tolerable supply with us; but the arrack came in capitally for punch, which served us for supper, in conjunction with a morsel of salt fish and a few Chinsurah cheroots. This system of diet, combined with the constant exposure, by day and night, to heavy tropical rains, to which military operations rendered us liable, could not but work together for evil; and melancholy were the effects soon produced thereby on the health of the troops, both European and native. The latter, however, did not die in the same proportion, their religious prejudices not permitting them to partake of the

salt beef or pork; but the want of vegetables to them was a most serious privation.

I trust I have not dwelt too minutely on the subject of fare, but having frequently been struck with the want of information that exists as to the cause of mortality at Rangoon, it seemed here not out of place to point out the real *origo mali*, thereby removing a very unjust imputation upon the climate, which we latterly ascertained beyond a doubt to be most salubrious. In Arracan the troops died of a pestilential fever peculiar to the place, whilst at Rangoon they died of scurvy and dysentery, the combined effects of bad food and hard service during the rainy season.

On the 25th of June my company received orders to march to Kimmendine, to relieve a detachment of the regiment which, in conjunction with a native corps, had formed the garrison since its capture. The distance was only five or six miles, but the road was in a dreadful state, and we were frequently up to our knees in mud. This was indeed the general character of the roads about Rangoon; and the men, for the most part, finding the difficulty of wading through mud and water encumbered with shoes, could not be prevented from throwing them away altogether; and many of the officers very soon

followed their example, for though in India the youngest ensign had been accustomed to the use of a horse on a march, we were all now obliged to trudge it. At the expiration of eighteen months from my arrival in the country, I purchased a miserable tattoo at an enormous price, but he was soon non-effective from a sore back and other ailments. There are no horses in the country, but the Pegue ponies are celebrated in the East for their strength and endurance of fatigue. Though their legs are short, the carcase is nearly as large as that of a horse, whilst their powerful and compact build renders them almost, if not quite, equal to as much work. A few generally fell into our hands at the capture of a stockade, on which their chiefs had been mounted, and the Burmese cavalry (generally known by the name of the Cassay horse) was entirely mounted upon this description of pony; but cavalry was an arm in which our opponents certainly did not shine. Symes estimated the Burmese cavalry at two thousand, and probably at this day the number is not increased, for we seldom saw above a hundred at a time, and the country generally is not adapted to it. On such occasions as the one referred to, officers and men frequently marched barefooted, with their panta-

loons tucked up to their knees, and many officers were reduced to the necessity of carrying their own knapsacks, when by death or otherwise they had been deprived of servants who could not now be replaced. When troops are on active service in the East, great license is permitted in the way of costume; in fact, the Regulations could not very well be enforced where there are no army tailors to supply deficiencies. On such a barbarous and distant service as that in question, it may well be imagined we were soon a most motley group, and would have contrasted rather strangely with the Foot Guards at St. James's. My own corps ran riot very much in this particular, our colonel not being over strict as to dress. Many wore trowsers made of a coarse blue calico, used for lining tents (this was *my* favourite material); others wore white, and some tartan; in fact, every one suited his own *taste*, and all the colours of the rainbow were soon seen in the ranks, *uniform* being now, as applied to dress, quite a misnomer. There were times when Falstaff himself might have been ashamed of us. Amongst the officers there was great diversity of taste as to head-dress, some wearing the high oil-skin shako, others foraging caps of various shapes. Moustaches also were

encouraged here and there by an aspiring few. As for gloves, I suppose there were hardly half a dozen pair amongst us, and of course we were soon altogether independent of such luxuries.

Irregularities in dress, however, though very unseemly on a parade in garrison, are of little or no importance on active service, when men should not be harassed about trifles; the main object then should be to keep the bayonets bright and the powder dry.

The move to Kimmendine, though only for a short time, was quite refreshing after having been so long cooped up within the lines at Rangoon. We had now a little more elbow-room, and could breathe freely; and as no enemy was believed to be in our immediate neighbourhood, I traversed the jungle daily with my gun, in the direction of Rangoon, in search of game, which, however, was scarce; and what there was it was difficult to get at, from the tangled nature of the underwood. On marshy spots near the river I occasionally shot snipe and whistling teal. The latter is a wild fowl familiar to sportsmen in India, and is so called from the peculiarity of its cry. It is larger than the common teal, and its plumage is reddish brown; though not much esteemed for food at

the period referred to, it was by no means despicable in a curry. The forest yielded quail and jungle fowl, the latter in great abundance, though I only bagged one occasionally, for they were shy and could seldom be induced to rise, at the approach of danger running off with extraordinary rapidity. These birds abounded throughout Ava, and were of the same species as our farm-yard poultry, except that I never saw any white or black, their plumage being generally of the pheasant kind. I can remember with pleasure how, on some of our early morning marches through the jungles of Pegue, our ears were greeted on all sides by the crowing of cocks and screaming of pea-fowl; they were, however, seldom visible, though at times the keen eye of a sportsman would catch a momentary glimpse of one, as it crossed our path in advance. On one occasion a detachment of my regiment was returning to head-quarters, after the capture of Sittang, winding its weary way through the jungle, when about daybreak one of us discerned a fine peacock at roost on a tree within a few yards of the road. There being no fowling-piece at hand, we deputed a serjeant of the light company, who was a crack shot, to knock him off his perch with a ball from

his fusil, but the gentleman escaped unscathed, much to our disappointment. The incident, trifling as it may be, is one of those to which I shall ever look back with pleasure—the hour, the place, the actors, all combining to fix it indelibly on my memory.

But the best fun we had in those days in the way of sporting was, when a party was formed, to beat the jungle in pursuit of cattle, several herds of which, after having been fired at and harassed by our people on first landing, had taken to the bush, which they now traversed in a wild state. It was seldom, however, that a fair opportunity offered of getting a shot at them, for as soon as discovered away they went at a gallop—bulls, cows and heifers, tearing through the underwood in a most furious manner. I was fortunate enough to fell two at different times with a ball from my single barrel—in one instance killing a cow, and in another a heifer; and a valuable prize they were in those hard times, as may well be supposed. The heifer was bagged when on a three days' tour of duty on outlying picket, the absence of the regiment on a stockading expedition not admitting of my being relieved. This fresh meat, therefore, was some little compensation to us for the disappointment of being

left in the rear, and a rare feast we had as long as it lasted, the heart and liver falling to my share as being the most dainty bits. I am sure our sentries kept as sharp a look-out for the cattle as they did for the enemy, though from a far different motive; and whenever they hove in sight, the officer of the picket was quickly summoned to the front with his *Joe Manton*. These poor animals naturally took advantage of the darkness to visit their familiar haunts in the vicinity of the town, from which our red coats scared them by day; and to them may be attributed many of those *false alarms* which so frequently disturbed our repose at that period, for as they brushed their way through the bushes, they, being mistaken for the enemy, frequently drew on themselves the fire of the whole line of sentries. Whilst on outpost at Kimmendine, we went on some adventurous expeditions in search of cattle, but killed none. On one day in particular, we were so keen on the trail that we lost our way in the dense belt of jungle that divides the post from Rangoon, and after tearing through briars and tangled brushwood for some hours, in no very pleasing mood (for we occasionally stumbled on skeletons, many wounded having perished here), we emerged on the cleared

ground occupied by our pickets at Rangoon—a distance of four or five miles!

On the night of the 25th, about twelve o'clock, we were all roused from our sleep to look upon a large *fire-raft*, which the enemy were floating down the river, for the benefit of our shipping at Rangoon. Our position, sloping as it did towards the stream, afforded us a favourable view of the mighty burning mass, the brilliant glare of which contrasted strongly with the darkness of midnight and the gloom of the surrounding forest. It was, indeed, one of the grandest scenes that I ever had the good fortune to witness. As it floated majestically past, belching forth at intervals masses of dense smoke and lurid flame, like a fiery leviathan, we trembled for our poor comrades afloat, in the event of its coming in contact with, and encircling any of, our vessels—for these engines of destruction were so arranged as to render this effect extremely probable, provided they touched, which was rarely the case, owing, under Providence, to the active and intrepid exertions of our Jack-tars, who, as soon as a fire-raft hove in sight, pushed off in boats to grapple with the monster. In the case in question, however, we were full of anxiety, this being one of the first visitors of the kind we had been

favoured with ; but no harm resulted from it, for we learned on the following morning that it had drifted ashore a mile or two below the stockade. Latterly, beams of timber chained together were anchored across the river as a safeguard against fire-rafts. The one referred to we estimated to be one hundred yards in length, and in general they were formed of thirty or forty canoes linked together, and piled up with faggots, and barrels of petroleum or earth-oil, much of which Ava produces.

Though no enemy were between us and headquarters, their activity was visible enough a short way up the river, at a place called Pagoda Point, where the Panlang creek forms a junction with the main river. Here they were constructing a stockade that promised to be of a formidable nature, whilst similar works were in progress on the opposite banks of the river and creek, so as to command the whole communication to the northward. It was our daily amusement to stroll down to the river, after breakfast, with a telescope, and see what progress the rascals had made with their stockades ; the distance was not much more than a mile, and we could plainly see that they were in considerable numbers, and labouring unremittingly. On one occasion we were grati-

fied with the sight of an engagement, of short duration, between these works and two of our vessels of war: Company's cruizers they were called. On the previous day they had passed up the river unmolested, their aim being to explore; on their return, however, the enemy pelted them with shot to the best of their ability, which our people of course returned with interest; but as fighting just then was not the object of their mission, they merely made the Burmans show their strength in artillery, and then dropped down the stream; and as the light fairy-looking craft quickly glided past us, several shot-holes in their snowy sails, and severed cordage, here and there fluttering in the breeze, were proofs of the enemy's fire not having been altogether without effect. The whole affair was like a scene in a play, and we youngsters thought it capital fun to look on during the performance.

It was, I think, on the day succeeding the above that something similar occurred, though there was a curious circumstance connected with it. A small brig or gun-boat, armed with one or two long guns, was sent up to the same point, to make a closer reconnaissance, and for this purpose she carried an officer of rank in the adjutant-general's department, an engineer

officer, and a party of troops from our stockade, which were taken on board *en passant*. The tide was running up, though slowly, and soon brought the little vessel abreast of the works. It had no sooner reached the furthest point, however, than the tide was on the turn, and here the brig, unable to proceed either up or down, was exposed to a heavy fire on all sides, to which she could only reply with her one or two guns. We certainly were very nervous about her, for she was but a frail affair, and had fearful odds to contend with; but we had great hopes, from our knowledge of Burman gunnery in general, though to be sure their round shot and grape (for they had ever abundance of the latter) made a terrible splash in the water, and it was evident that she had been struck several times. She was in rather an awkward dilemma, no doubt; but in the middle of the affair, to our infinite surprise—for we could see it all from Kimmendine—up went a *white flag* to her mast-head! The intent of it was, I conclude, to request them to “cease firing”—so, at least, it struck us lookers-on; but our ignorant opponents made no distinction between a white flag and a red one, for they did not abate their efforts. It was a curious fancy certainly, that hoisting a

white flag at such a juncture. A surrender, of course, was never dreamed of, but it was somewhat unreasonable to suppose that we were to enjoy the privilege of prying into their very loop-holes with impunity! After a time, the little vessel dropped off with the tide, with the loss of one man killed by a grape-shot (I forget how many wounded), and much damage in her hull and rigging.

There were many other little varieties to enliven us during our tour at the outpost, for reconnoitering parties were constantly sent out to watch the enemy, who were ever plying backwards and forwards in their war-boats, evidently meditating mischief. In one instance, a small party of the 10th N.I. had been sent out to scour the jungle on the river's bank, but they soon returned, bringing back with them the lifeless body of a fine old subadar (a native captain), who had been picked off by the enemy within a few hundred yards of the stockade. His loss, though only a native officer, was bewailed in a singular manner by all the European officers of his regiment, and the gallant old Major D——R——, a proper Highlander, mourned over the sable veteran as if he had been his own child. On another occasion, a party had two sepoy's

killed, and three wounded ; and on another some five or six of the enemy were killed, without any loss to us. They were, however, beginning to get very saucy, and consequently some 6-pounders and additional troops were sent to strengthen the garrison, but at this juncture I returned to head-quarters, the detachment having been relieved.

We were rather disappointed at being recalled so soon, for an epidemic, in the shape of a fever—not a dangerous one, however—having broken out during our absence, we had rather hugged ourselves at the prospect of escaping the inconvenience. On reaching Rangoon we were much struck with the melancholy change that had come over the place since we left it, only a week before. It was now one vast hospital, the best part of the force, including camp-followers, being under the influence of fever ; and it was about as gloomy a scene as could well be conceived, to see our soldiers crawling about on all sides, in their hospital clothing, ghastly as ghosts. This fever was very sudden in its attacks, and was followed by an unusual prostration of strength and total loss of appetite. In no one instance, however, do I believe it proved fatal, which is remarkable, when we consider that hardly any individual

escaped the disease; but the very enervated state in which it left our frames rendered them more open to the attacks of more malignant disorders which so soon after committed such havoc in our camp. Not being a feverish subject, and having held out almost to the last, I fully calculated upon escaping the epidemic; but the ugly monster had not forgotten me—it ferreted me out, and laid me on my back, without a particle of remorse, thereby incapacitating me for duty and depriving me of the gratification of sharing with my regiment in an attack of some importance on the enemy's position at Kumaroot. On the evening the order arrived for the corps to hold themselves in readiness, I was stretched upon my cot, conversing with a knot of brother subs, and the disappointment I felt at the prospect of being left in the rear, when my comrades were gathering laurels, was extreme; yes, extreme is the word, though some doubtless there are who would deny the existence of any acute disappointment in such a case. I never pretended to be a fire-eater, or to have any particular taste for fighting in the abstract; but I was proud of my corps, and very naturally wished to be a partaker, as well as a witness, of all its achievements, and in this instance to be

debarred the pleasure, I felt as keenly as any schoolboy that had been cheated out of a holiday.

It may not be out of place here to detail another disappointment of this kind, which was still more annoying. My regiment had been warned one evening for a stockading expedition on the following day, in company with other troops. As ill-luck would have it, I was on picket; but as this was the first time my corps had been called out, I was of course most anxious to be one of the party, and to flesh my maiden sword in the carcase of a Burman; still the circumstance of being *on duty* seemed an effectual bar. Military ardour, however, burned strong within me; Mars was in the ascendant, and I was determined to make a desperate effort to see the fun on the morrow. Off, therefore, I posted to the colonel, whom I soon carried by a *coup de main*, though to be sure I took him rather at a disadvantage, for he was in bed and half asleep when I attacked him. I pointed out, in glowing terms, the hardship of my case, and how very practicable it was for the serjeant to take charge of the picket during the few hours I should probably be absent. He saw the justice of my arguments, and consented at once to my going. On the following morning I fell in with

my company, taking care in every way to escape the vigilance of our quick-sighted adjutant, by sheltering myself as much as practicable amongst the men. Ere we had cleared the camp, however, he had spied me, and on finding that I was acting with the colonel's permission, my arguments were soon made to vanish before the adjutant's more powerful rhetoric. He was certainly a capital officer, and moreover had the experience of nearly twenty years' service, and on his pointing out to the too easy commandant the imprudence of leaving a picket without a commissioned officer, I was ordered forthwith to beat a retreat to my post, during which I met General McBean and his staff *en route* to join the column; all of whom, I fancied, gazed upon me as I sneaked back to the deserted lines with downcast and mortified look, as one quitting his duty under very equivocal circumstances. Here was gall and wormwood!

But to return to the previous disappointment, when fever laid an *embargo* on me. The military operations of that day were eminently successful, and I lost much by not being present. The troops employed formed two columns—one by water, under Sir Archibald Campbell, for the reduction of the works at Pagoda Point, before

spoken of, and another by land, under General McBean, to attack the stockades at Kumaroot. The works were all more or less connected, and were defended by the main body of the hostile army, under their celebrated chief, Shumbah Woonghee. Suffice it to say, the enemy were defeated on all points; several stockades fell, one after another, like a pack of cards, and their chief and 700 men were left dead on the field. Upon this occasion the Woonghee's gold chain of office fell to the lot of a soldier of the 13th Light Infantry. Its value, by weight alone, was Rs. 650, or £65. An officer of my own corps had the good fortune to secure an excellent double gun, London made, and nearly new! It was loaded and in the hands of a wounded chief when he got possession of it. The poor fellow was mortally wounded, and was crawling away under shelter, when C——, eyeing the prize, gently released it from his grasp, which was all fair enough. Ere the close of the war, however, the gun changed hands again, for C—— fell in his turn by a Burman bullet, when it was sold with his effects.

It was about this period, the middle of July, 1824, that disease began to commit such ravages amongst us. Scurvy and dysentery were the

most destructive disorders, and these soon filled our hospitals to overflowing. My own corps had soon 240 men in hospital, and most other regiments in proportion; and in such an impure state was their blood, from bad diet and other aggravating causes, that few of the poor fellows that had once entered the hospital ever left it again alive. To be on the doctor's list was almost certain death. The wounded men, too, died in an unusual proportion, a mere scratch, from the aforesaid cause, often ending in mortification and death. The total want, moreover, of fish, fresh meat, milk, bread, or vegetables, rendered the dieting of the sick a most difficult task. Funerals were now of daily occurrence; in our own regiment three, four, five, sometimes six, men were carried out at a time. On one occasion, I remember *ten* men of the regiment being buried in one day. The process in such cases was very simple, coffins, and all such civilized paraphernalia, being quite out of the question. The cold clay was lightly sewn up in the blanket that had previously been used for warmth, and, being conveyed on a sort of hurdle, was hurried into its shallow and humid grave, under the superintendence of the officer of the day, whose duty it was to read the funeral service.

This melancholy office, of course, frequently devolved upon me ; so often, indeed, that for years after the war in Ava, my prayer-book, when the leaves were turned over, invariably opened at the service for the burial of the dead !

CHAP. V.

CAPTURE OF THE FORT AND PAGODA OF
SYRIAM.

Unsatisfactory as our position was during the first ten months we were located at Rangoon, and crippled and contracted as all our efforts necessarily were from the total want of locomotive means, it must not be supposed that the force led a life of indolence and inaction ; on the contrary, as far as we had the power, we were indefatigable in doing what mischief we could. An armed mass, unprovided with the means of moving, may not be inaptly compared to a giant chained to the ground, but still having his limbs at liberty, thereby retaining the power of lashing out at all within his reach. Under this similitude we kicked and struck out, with untiring energy, in every direction ; and though our main body

was quiescent, its powerful limbs, in the shape of strong detachments by land and water, made desperate attacks upon the foe whenever they were within range. Nevertheless, "*non progredi est regredi*," and though, in these sorties, we shot and bayoneted our opponents by hundreds, and literally revelled in "honour and glory," if such an operation upon the carcasses of barbarians may be so distinguished, it was soon evident that our measures were purely of a defensive nature, and that, though nominally an invading army, we were only masters of as much of Burmah as our soldiers covered, whilst our constant, though petty victories over forest fastnesses, generally cost us in valuable lives much more than they were worth. Hardly a day elapsed without our coming into collision with the enemy, on some point or other; by night they would make a dash at an outlying picket, whilst by day parties of our people would scour the neighbouring jungle in quest of the foe, as if they were beating for game! During this period many a gallant affair occurred, the details of which, probably, are doomed to obscurity for want of a suitable chronicler. Would that I could do them justice! but they could only be narrated with effect by actors in the scenes. My aim in these papers

is limited to a tolerably minute description of such events as I myself witnessed, touching lightly only upon others, as occasion may offer.

For some time past, there has been much controversy amongst our military writers as to the relative merits of the sword and bayonet; in reading them, the following affair naturally recurred to me. On the 28th of May, 1824, not long after our landing, Sir Archibald Campbell, at the head of three hundred of H.M.'s 13th and 38th Foot, and the 9th Madras Native Infantry, had a sharp but successful action with the enemy, at a place called Joazong, some eight or ten miles inland, killing 300 or 400 of them, and destroying some stockades, which were defended in a most obstinate manner. The operation cost us the lives of Lieutenants Howard and Mitchell, and two other officers, and thirty men killed and wounded. This action was well contested on the part of the Burmese, whose obstinate courage, under an attack from a highly disciplined and well-armed foe, proved them to be no contemptible enemy behind their stockades. At this period the monsoon had fairly set in, and so heavy and constant was the rain upon this occasion that not a musket could be persuaded to go off; the troops were, therefore, *wholly dependent*

on the bayonet, of which they made a good and gallant use, proving it to be no bad weapon after all on a *rainy day*, whatever Col. Mitchell may say to the contrary. The utter inefficiency of the flint-lock, in comparison with the percussion, was never so manifest as in this war, when active operations were so frequently carried on in heavy rain.

At the opening of the war, a detachment, consisting of two companies of H.M.'s 13th L.I. and the 40th Bengal Native Infantry, was despatched under Brigadier M'Creagh, to capture Cheduba, a large island off the coast of Arracan, which, from its reported fertility, it was hoped would be a useful source of supply for the army. It fell, after a smart resistance; one or two hundred of the enemy were killed, while our loss did not exceed thirty officers and men killed and wounded. Its acquisition, however, was of little value, whilst the climate soon proved to be most destructive to the health of the troops. We made several other distant conquests, hoping by this worrying mode of warfare to bring matters to a crisis with his golden-footed majesty. The island of Negrais, at the entrance of the Bassein river, one of the many mouths of the Irrawaddy, was also captured by a detachment of native infantry.

under Major Wahab ; but we did not retain possession of it. Martaban, Tavoy, and Mergui, towns of note on the Tenasserim coast, likewise fell before detachments of our troops, without costing us much blood, though the enemy's flowed, as it generally did, freely enough. Tavoy and Mergui were most valuable acquisitions to us as sources of supply for the army ; and, the climate being peculiarly salubrious, it was wisely determined to form hospitals there for the reception of our convalescent soldiers from Rangoon, which measure was attended with very considerable benefit. The Tenasserim provinces, together with Arracan, were ceded to us on the termination of hostilities : the former is a narrow but productive strip of coast, running north and south, and connecting Pegue with the Malay peninsula. It now forms, under our auspices, a thriving settlement ; and the new and flourishing town of Moulmein, its capital, is the headquarters of a considerable military force, European and Native, supplied by the Madras Government. Arracan, on the contrary, is a most impracticable country, being all mountain and forest, over which fever reigns triumphant. A fine army, of eight thousand men, assembled here under General Morrison, at the opening of

the war, with a view of forming a junction, by a march over the mountains, with the Rangoon army, and then moving simultaneously upon the capital. This force, however, was never destined to reap much honour and glory in the war. The town of Arracan, a strong and elevated place, was captured, after a succession of smart affairs, which cost us two or three hundred men. Beyond this, they achieved nothing, for soon after, being attacked in turn by the deadly fever of the country, the force was reduced from 8,000 to 1,000 effective men. The fever committed unheard-of havoc amongst them, and General Morrison himself was amongst its victims. The gallant but ill-fated 44th British regiment, that has so lately been swept into eternity from the united effects of mismanagement and treachery, formed, together with the 54th Foot, a portion of this army. How melancholy to reflect that the colours of the former corps, that once floated so proudly in the breeze on the field of Waterloo, should be now sullied by the hands of the savage and faithless Affghans, amidst the snows and mountains of Cabul!

Our early military movements in Burmah did not all, however, go on so swimmingly as those previously alluded to. We met with a melan-

choly reverse at a place called Ramoo, in Arracan, where a detachment, consisting of 1,300 native troops (mostly irregulars, I believe,) under Capt. Noton, were cut to pieces by an overpowering force of the enemy under the celebrated Bundoola, some few officers and sepoys only effecting their escape. It was a dashing deed on the part of our antagonists, and shewed what mischief they could do when they set to work *con amore*, for—

It is war's prize to take all vantages,
And ten to one is no impeach of valour.

I shall now give the details of the attack and capture of the town of Syriam and its fortified pagoda, situated in the district of the same name on the left bank of the Pegue river. The town, which stands on the remains of the old Portuguese fort and factory, is about six or seven miles from Rangoon, and a little above the junction of the two rivers. It was formerly a place of considerable note in these parts, being well located for commercial purposes; but on the springing up of Rangoon, in 1757, under the auspices of the great usurper, Alompra, Syriam soon dwindled into insignificance, and at the time we took possession it was little more than a village, though built on commanding ground, and

strongly fortified, according to Burmese notions of engineering. The place was much overgrown by jungle and brushwood, and was distant from 800 to 900 yards from the river's bank, with which it communicated by a straight causeway, a deep nullah or creek intervening, at musket-shot distance from the walls. Four or five miles beyond the old fort rose the Syriam pagoda, amidst the dense mass of forest that on all sides surrounded it. This was another stronghold, and a formidable one it was, from its elevation, as well as from the barricade and breastworks by which its area was protected; whilst all the approaches to the place were commanded by cannon.

These two posts were visited by us soon after the occupation of Rangoon, the enemy flying at our approach without firing a shot. It was not, however, then deemed expedient to occupy them; consequently, the Burmese soon resumed possession, with a larger force, and having strengthened the works considerably they availed themselves of the vicinity of Syriam to our shipping for making constant predatory excursions on the boats of the fleet: these, too intent upon getting a supply of fresh fish, were often incautiously led a dangerous distance from home. The annoy-

ance was so considerable after a time that measures became necessary for checking it, and for this purpose a detachment, consisting of portions of H.M.'s 41st, the 1st Madras European Regiment, and the 12th Madras Native Infantry, in all about 800 bayonets, under Brigadier Smelt, was ordered to hold itself in readiness to embark. It was early on the morning of the 4th August, 1824, that we marched down to the King's wharf at Rangoon for the purpose of embarkation. What campaigner in Ava is there who does not retain a vivid, if not a pleasurable, recollection of the King's or *Scandal* wharf? There were two or three wharfs at Rangoon, immediately outside the walls; they were framed of wood, and flights of steps descended from them to the river. The one in question was close to the main gate of the town, and was sheltered from the weather by a tiled roof: it was upon this that the enemy had a battery of twelve guns at the period of our arrival, which was so soon silenced by the Liffey's powerful broadside. Here, too, on a flag-staff hard by, the Burman flag had once floated, then replaced by the meteor flag of England; and hence, I conceive, the spot was called the *King's* wharf. This, however, was merely its official designation (if I may so express it,) for it

soon acquired the additional one of *Scandal*, from its being the usual evening rendezvous of all the idlers of the camp, where the topics and tittle-tattle of the day were discussed or retailed in the cool evening air, wafted to us over the bosom of the noble Rangoon river, which is here upwards of 1,000 yards broad. Opposite was the town of Maindhu, in the district of Dalla, whilst the centre of the stream presented a lively and gratifying spectacle in the number of men-of-war and transports moored there. Here, of course, was the principal point of communication with the shipping; and when dinners were scarce ashore (which was soon the case,) there were many who contrived, by a little manœuvring, to procure one afloat, (where they lived comparatively in clover,) by lounging on the wharf at a seasonable hour, so as to waylay some skipper friend, who seldom failed in such case to take pity on the hungry landsman and invite him on board to dinner. There were some two or three notorious for this foraging propensity, and for many months they might have been seen almost daily hovering about the King's wharf between the hours of two and three P.M.

Having reached this spot, we embarked in a flotilla, composed of country canoes, thatched

over, and manned by Burmese—ship boats of various kinds, and Bengal row-boats, as they were called. The latter were admirably adapted to river service, being decked, and armed with a carronnade in their bows, either a nine or a twelve pounder. They were Government boats, the men being in regular pay, and under the command of a Mr. Lindguist, of the Bengal pilot service, a particularly smart young officer, who, though fighting was not his vocation, in one instance was severely wounded. On occasions like the present, when his boats were in requisition, he would land and form up his *row-boat wallahs* (so he called them,) as a sort of auxiliary to the troops, when a stockade was to be attacked. To be sure they were a motley crew, being armed with spears, swords, boat-hooks, &c. ; but they helped to swell our numbers, and passed well enough as a corps of *irregular* marines.

In common with others, I was wholly ignorant of the object of the expedition, till the flotilla was nearly abreast of Syriam, when our attention was aroused by the firing of shells from the *Tom Tough*, bomb-vessel, right ahead of us. At first I could discover nothing beyond a dense mass of forest and underwood to the right, far as the eye could stretch, though the bursting of the shells

in the air, as was frequently the case, indicated the point we were bound for. At length, as we gently moved up with the tide, we discerned the old Portuguese fort, about 1,000 yards distant, at the termination of a long and narrow vista of brushwood and forest trees. The first glimpse of the rude old fortress, which is built on an abrupt and commanding height, was formidable enough, and seemed to promise a tough morning's work. On coming abreast of the place, the *halt* was sounded (for bugles are available afloat as well as ashore); the boats drew up under the bank, and ere ten minutes had elapsed our column of 800 bayonets, supported by a body of jolly blue-jackets, under Captain Marryatt, of literary celebrity, was formed up, ready for action.

We were all soon in motion, and now obtained a clear view of the place, which hitherto had been scarcely discernible. It was certainly an ugly-looking work, as regards its accessibility, and was shrouded in jungle on all sides, save the front, by which we approached. The site was abrupt and lofty, and had been newly scarped and cleared, whilst the old wall on its summit had been patched up wherever it had given way, by the favourite national process of *stockading*. Huge pieces of timber, moreover, were suspended

from the walls, to be cut away at the moment of the assault, of course for the purpose of overwhelming us—not an uncommon mode of defence amongst the Burmans in elevated positions. The interior from a distant view, however picturesque, was not promising as regards plunder or prize-money. It was much shaded by lofty trees, and here and there the spire of a pagoda or the roof of a house was visible, while in groups along the ramparts were to be seen the dusky defenders of Syriam, with their glittering spears, gilt chattahs or umbrellas, and gay swallow-tailed standards floating in the breeze. Matters looked sufficiently formidable, and although as yet not a shot had been fired at us, it was clear, from certain rude apertures in the works, at regulated intervals, (intended as embrasures,) that cannon would not be altogether wanting to honour our arrival; and it was at these points more particularly that we noticed the hostile groups before alluded to. Altogether the rough and rugged forest fortress, made up, as it was, of wall and wood, and enveloped in luxuriant foliage, was a most striking scene, and would have formed an admirable subject for the painter, with all the military accompaniments both for attack and defence. Indeed, this place forms one of a series of coloured en-

gravings, from the pencil (if I remember rightly) of Captain Marryatt, illustrative of a few of the many events of the war, and which were published shortly after.

The approach, as before stated, was by a narrow causeway on either flank, the ground being low and swampy, and overgrown with dank herbage and impenetrable brushwood. On this we moved, the 41st leading the way, but had scarcely proceeded a hundred yards when the enemy opened upon us from eight pieces of cannon, charged with grape and round shot—a formidable battery, it will be said, and so in truth we thought it; but the effects were less felt than might have been expected, thanks to the unskilful gunnery of our foes. Noise enough there was, in all conscience, from the report of the powder and the rushing of the shot, which produced a good deal of bobbing of heads (for heads will bob when cannon-balls are on the wing); but our casualties were not heavy, whereas, had there been any thing like decent practice, under such circumstances, the approach being straight and narrow, and the position commanding, one-half of us, at the very least, ought, according to all ordinary, or rather *ordnance* rules, to have been put *hors de combat* before making the assault.

Our little column pushed on with ardour, in spite of the cannonade, when the head of it was checked by a deep and impassable creek, at long musket-shot of the fort, the enemy having taken the precaution to destroy the bridge. This was an awkward obstacle, and quite unexpected on our part. But we looked for a speedy remedy to the never-failing resources of our allies, the blue-jackets; and they did not disappoint us.

In sailors we find a happy union of ingenuity with intrepidity, which renders them equal to most emergencies, whether at sea or on shore. Jack can turn a hand to most things; he is of all trades, and is seldom out of his element—except upon horseback. Soldiers, on the contrary, with all their intrepidity, are by no means such universal geniuses; there is a stiffness and an angularity about their movements (the result of endless drill) which seem imparted to their very ideas, and contrast strongly with the readiness and elasticity of a blue-jacket. Numberless exceptions, of course, there are, but, speaking generally, soldiers have not that readiness of action peculiar to seamen, and in this respect a parade-ground education must yield to a ship-board one, the barrack-room to the fore-castle. When the obstruction in ques-

tion was discovered, there was a simultaneous call for the "sailors," who readily responded to the summons, brushing past us helter-skelter, with Capt. M—— at their head. Some of us were much amused at the time, to see how very unceremoniously they threw aside their muskets (on such occasions some were so armed, or rather *encumbered*) when ordered to the head of the column to construct something of a bridge. The word was, "Throw aside your muskets, men, and follow me!" and we soldiers were startled to see with what apparent indifference as to their fate the Jack-tars pitched their fire-locks to the right and left on the swampy ground, at the risk of injuring, if not losing them altogether. I should think that a sailor on service must hate a musket, and would rather trust to a cutlass, or a *cut-slash*, as I have heard some call it—a weapon more congenial to his taste.

During this interval we, of course, were stationary under the enemy's fire, than which no situation can be more trying to the nerves of soldiers. And now, in addition to the cannon, which luckily were ill-directed, we were exposed to a galling fire of musketry from the enemy's right, which brought down a man every here

there, and from which the seamen, being in front and nearest to the place, suffered most. I remember that one or two of the poor fellows had their limbs amputated, from the severity of their wounds, and some were killed.

After a few minutes' suspense, "Forward!" was again the word; the creek was passed, and on we dashed at the *pas de charge*, the enemy blazing away at us *con spirito*, whilst we threw out parties of light infantry to the right and left, to keep down the fire of their skirmishers, who were popping away at us from the brushy and broken ground in front and on the flanks of the position. But our lads were in the right humour, and were not to be stopped by such impediments. My station was on the left flank, somewhere about the centre, the column being formed right and front, and here we had the full benefit of the enemy's fire.* There was a steep ascent to clamber up; a deafening "Hurrah!" was heard, and a minute or two after we forced our way into the place, some over the ramparts, others through the gateway, the enemy retreating with

* A party of the 12th Native Infantry were the first to enter the Fort of Syriam, they having been thrown forward to cover the construction of a bridge by the sailors under Capt. Marryatt, for the passage of the troops, across a deep creek.

the greatest precipitation the moment the head of the column entered, and thereby escaping, with trifling loss, leaving us in possession of the fort, eight guns, and a considerable quantity of ammunition. Their conduct in this instance was inexplicable, for, whilst they often defended an ordinary stockade with astonishing obstinacy, their resistance here was most inadequate to the strength and advantages of their position. If the Burmans had done their duty manfully, and stood to their guns as they ought, they might have crippled us most seriously; as it was, we had an easy victory. The interior of the old fort proved to be nothing more than a village, though it had been dignified with the name of a town. It was ransacked in the usual manner, but the place had nothing either of value or interest to recommend it; heaps of paddy, numberless spears and rusty firelocks being the *spolia opima* of the occasion, in addition to the guns and ammunition. Syriam, nevertheless, was the residence of a governor, and in his house (government-house, I suppose, we must call it) were found some curious documents, of which translations may be seen in the Appendix to Snodgrass's Narrative of the War. They were in the shape of general orders to the governor from a superior

officer, urging extreme measures against us, and directing that logs of wood, roots of trees, and such like impediments be thrown into the channel of the river, so as effectually to prevent the escape of our shipping. The commencement of this G.O. is so characteristic that I must transcribe it: "In order that not one of the *wild* foreigners may escape from being destroyed and slain, they must be apprehended, by covering the face of the earth with an innumerable host, to accomplish which, effectual measures are now in progress." This is an amusing specimen of Oriental rhodomontade.

"But half of our weary task was done" when we had taken possession of the fort, for we soon learnt that the pagoda, visible in the distance, and towering above the forest, was strongly fortified and garrisoned, and that the enemy had retired upon it. This, therefore, was to be the next point of attack, and to reduce this post a large portion of the troops, under the command of Colonel Kelly, of the Madras European Regt., was put in motion, the residue being left to protect our new conquest.

It was scarcely noon when Syriam fell; and now, before we had well recovered our breath, the bugles again sounded, and we hurried to our

arms ; the word “ quick march ! ” was heard, and in a minute or two we found ourselves descending the rugged ground on the opposite face of the fort to which we entered, and were soon hid from view by the dense jungle. The column at first had to wind its way along a narrow and tortuous path, much overgrown by underwood ; but in a short time we emerged upon the high road connecting the two places, which for the most part had breadth and elevation, and enabled us to march at our ease. At this distance of time I cannot recal all the features that presented themselves *en route*, but I well remember to have been much struck with the Arcadian character of the scenery. The two points—*i.e.*, the fort and the pagoda—were from four to five miles apart, the intervening space being mostly jungle, though throughout the distance there were many open spots sprinkled with noble trees, and glades covered with verdure, that were quite inviting. The work in hand did but ill accord with their still and tranquil air, which seemed to breathe of nothing but peace ; whereas all the serenity of the scene was momentarily disturbed by the rude voices and coarse mirth of a foreign soldiery, as they marched to battle, utterly reckless, probably, for the most part, of any thing save “ prize-

money and promotion," for of soldiers in general it may be truly said—

In the joys of the moment lustily sharing,
'Bout the past or the future not thinking or caring.

Not that soldiers are one jot worse than other men either, after making a due allowance for the trying circumstances in which they are sometimes placed. It is true that in India our European soldiers too frequently degenerate into mere animals ; being debarred from intellectual recreations or harmless amusements, by the want of education and the heat of the climate, which will not admit of exposure to the sun with impunity, the thoughtless soldier expends his time, his money and his health in the canteen, the curse of the army in India. The only effectual remedy for this evil is, to ensure to every poor child in Old England a sound *religious* education. As for the present generation of toppers amongst our soldiery in the East, they have a strong claim on the sympathies of the serious thinking part of the community, and much, I think, may be done towards reclaiming many of them by the efforts of indefatigable and zealous chaplains ; and none others should ever be selected for India, where there is so much work to be done and so few to perform it. And here I cannot but notice the

remissness of the British Government in reference to the spiritual wants of their troops when on active service. There is no lack of surgeons to look after the body ; why should not the soul be, *at least*, equally cared for ? I cannot conceive why chaplains should not follow armies into the field, unless it be on the score of expense, though this alone would be a most insufficient argument.

Though the road was for the most part shady, and the march short, we suffered severely from the heat, as I well remember. It was one of those "fine sunshiny mornings," the regular succession of which, in the East, is so astonishing to the new arrival from cold and cloudy Albion, and, the sun being nearly vertical, there was no escaping his piercing rays. Exhausted by the heat, we piled arms for a short time in one of the open spots alluded to, and attacked the contents of our havresacks, to invigorate our frames for the tough work we fully anticipated was before us. Again we moved on, and in due time the pagoda of Kyk Kyk, which we had lost sight of amidst a sea of foliage since we left the fort, once more opened upon our view, distant about three-quarters of a mile, on the summit of a gently sloping hill, the approach to it being, as in the case of the fort, by a natural avenue, the narrow road walled in by

lofty bamboo bushes or underwood, and straight as an arrow, giving the enemy every advantage for using their guns with effect. As we neared the place, we could perceive that the approach to the pagoda was by a long and broad flight of steps, at the top of which was the wall by which such buildings were usually surrounded, the gateway or entrance being strongly barricaded. Under any other circumstances the pagoda itself would have been an interesting object, for it was of a large size and elegant in form, and its site was highly picturesque; but our attention was now rivetted to its base, and the difficulties of access that it threatened. We were thus curiously surveying matters as we marched along, when, having approached within 700 or 800 yards, a flash of fire was visible on the summit of the steps, followed closely by a volume of smoke, and at the same moment a roundshot, from a 9 or a 12-pounder, cut through the bushes within three or four yards of our left flank, with a crackling noise. Had it taken the head of the column, we should have suffered severely, for a dozen of us, at least, would have fallen; as it was, the shot merely put us on our guard, and it was satisfactory to find that the gun was not laid with the nicest precision. To avoid a second discharge

from this ugly customer, the troops quickened their pace, and on ascending the hill we diverged from the road and formed up in column of section on an open grassy space of some extent to our left, out of the line of the enemy's guns, and about 150 yards from the foot of the stairs, a dense screen of trees and shrubs at the pagoda's base effectually concealing our movements from the foe.

And now we calculated upon a formidable resistance, and screwed ourselves up accordingly. We had no artillery with us, and the place was so enveloped in jungle that to have spent much time in reconnoitering for a weak point would have only been labour lost, and having arranged to return to camp by night, we had no time to spare. There was no alternative, then, but to take the bull by the horns—that is, to dash up the steps under the very muzzles of their guns, and to force an entrance as we best could, for I am inclined to think we were not provided with scaling-ladders upon this occasion. Our arrangements for the assault were soon made. Muskets were now loaded, and bayonets fixed; a few words of encouragement were addressed to the men; the “advance” was sounded, and off we started in double time. The word “right shoulders forward!” was heard, and in less than

a minute we were at the foot of the stairs. A desultory fire now opened upon us from all points, but, being ill-directed, it had little effect, and our progress was not for a moment impeded. The stairs, though long, were of considerable breadth, which enabled us to shew a good front. To the right and left we could look down upon the jungle that skirted the position, and from hence the enemy popped away, taking us in flank as well as in front. But it was all unavailing; up—up—up we went, firing and cheering alternately, and the height was soon crowned, with but little loss. It may be thought the attacking party acted irregularly in firing at all, and so I admit it did; but these things will happen, nevertheless. In such cases troops are ever cautioned not to return a shot, but in the steadiest regiments, I suspect, there are many who cannot resist the temptation of blazing away when fired at, as long as they have a round of ammunition left in their pouches. In this way was many a trigger irregularly pulled at my elbow, and one clumsy fellow in particular, under the excitement of the moment, was within an ace of blowing my brains out, for the barrel of his musket was over my shoulder, and its muzzle within an inch or two of my ear when he discharged it!

At the top of the stairs we found a strong

breastwork (the wall of the pagoda), whilst the entrance was strongly barricaded. But these obstacles created little or no delay ; the enemy were panic-struck by the boldness of the attack, and retreated with precipitation the moment they saw our white faces peeping over the breastwork, allowing us to batter down the barricades and to clamber over the wall without any further opposition. Many of us were soon in the interior, and in full cry after the foe ; but at this game we disciplinarians had no chance with these flexible sons of the forest, who threw themselves over the wall and bounded down the rough ascent with the agility of a herd of antelopes, when the jungle effectually concealed them from view. The suddenness of their disappearance was really quite startling ; to have pursued them into the forest would have been useless, so we contented ourselves with blazing away at random as long as there seemed a chance of a shot telling. Here and there we could catch a glimpse of a fugitive amongst the bushes, and after a time a considerable number were seen to emerge on an open spot in the distance, but far beyond the reach of powder and ball ; and here we will leave them.

Thus fell the fortified pagoda of Syriam, with but little loss on either side, though the enemy's

could seldom be ascertained with accuracy, as they always hurried away most of their wounded, under the impression, probably, that we should put them to death. The position was a very strong one, and its defence reflected as little credit upon the garrison as did that of the fort; nevertheless, our troops deserved great credit, for they were exposed to a galling fire at both places. Here we made a further capture of four pieces of cannon, one of which we found literally crammed to the muzzle with all kinds of missiles, no one having had the hardihood to discharge it. These we spiked and threw into a tank close by, little deeming they would ever be again brought to bear against us; but, strange to say, these very guns were recovered, remounted, and instrumental in causing us much loss at a subsequent period!

A detachment of pioneers that accompanied us (the Madras pioneers were indefatigable fellows) employed themselves in dismantling the works as far as time and means would allow, and in burning down all the houses. This last measure, severe as it may seem, was, I conceive, necessary, to lessen the probability of the enemy's re-occupying the position; it was, nevertheless, extremely painful to see many really picturesque

buildings in flames. Some there were that answered this description, situated in pleasant gardens shaded by the jack, the mango, and the graceful bamboo, and opening upon the spacious green where the troops formed up previous to the assault. The spot was altogether most attractive, and I still have a lively recollection of it, though our visitation sadly marred some of its fairest features.

Our day's work done, we in due time retraced our steps, rejoined our comrades, re-embarked in the flotilla, and returned to Rangoon, where we reposed soundly and securely on the same night, after our fatiguing excursion; but the gathering of laurels is no sinecure!

CHAP. VI.

DALLA CREEK STOCKADES.—AN AMBUSCADE.

“*Per mare, per terram*,” is, I think, the motto of the gallant *jollies*, as the sailors call the Royal Marines; and an honourable distinction it is, implying a readiness and an ability to encounter all services, whether ashore or afloat, when and where their country requires them. Now we Ava soldiers, or “Heroes of Ava,” as the newspapers called us, might very justly have adopted this for our motto, no small proportion of our hostile operations being carried on in boats, owing to the many rivers and creeks by which the country is intersected; these, in fact, for the most part, form the highways of Ava, and agreeable travelling they afforded, contrasted with the rugged and overgrown forest tracks that

stretch away into the interior. It may here be observed that the word *creek*, above used, is seldom or ever heard in England. Here we have nothing but rivers and brooks, whilst in distant lands it is constantly applied, or rather misapplied, to rivulets even at a distance from the sea—a great error, as anybody may discern on a reference to the dictionary. This mistake was commonly made in Burmah, where every feeder of the main streams was denominated a creek. Many of these obscure creeks were broad sheets of water, and in this little island of ours, where every puddle is called a pond, and every gutter has a name, and is magnified into a river, would be considered noble streams. Cheltenham, for instance, that queen of watering-places, derives its name from a wretched turbid brook, which is dignified with the appellation of the “river Chelt.”

Our operations were thus of two kinds, *boating* and *stockading*, for so we distinguished them ; and I shall now endeavour to narrate the proceedings of one of these *boating* parties, the scene of action being on one of the aforesaid creeks. A *boating party* in Ava might not have been quite so pleasurable an excursion as the term would imply in Old England, but such a trip was,

nevertheless, highly exciting and full of interest to a young soldier. To be sure there were no fair ladies of the party for the youngsters to flirt with, neither were we provided with any of those good things which generally form the chief attraction in these floating pic-nics at home—such as cold veal pies, roast chicken, and bottled porter, &c. &c. &c. We could not make any great display in this way, being just then somewhat deficient in the victualling department, a scanty supply of salt pork and mouldy biscuit being all there was to tempt us; but then we had flags and music, with all their exciting accompaniments—

The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
All pomp, pride, circumstance of glorious war—

and gallant spirits ready for any duty to which the bugle might summon them.

It is well known how Rangoon was deserted by its 40,000 inhabitants on our first arrival; not, it is believed, from any unwillingness on their part to hold communication with us, but through the restraint they were under from the Burmese authorities. With such energy had the latter followed up their measures that, three months after our landing, the period to which this narrative refers, not more than two or three hundred of the

natives had returned to their homes, and those were, for the most part, attendants on the European merchants and other residents located in the place, and consequently availed little towards forming a market, the site of which was a beggarly account of empty stalls. At length, however, there seemed a prospect of Rangoon being again re-occupied by its proper tenants, and bright were the visions that flitted before the eyes of us half-starved soldiers, of fresh vegetables and sleek buffaloes, to say nothing of the *et cæteras* of milk, butter, eggs, and such dainties!

On the 7th of August, 1824, a communication reached Sir Archibald Campbell, to the effect that a considerable number of people were anxious to join us from a village situated about twelve miles up the Dalla Creek, where they were forcibly detained by the authorities, and that if we would make a demonstration in their favour they would unite with us and return to Rangoon. It was added that we should encounter little or no opposition in our progress, as there were no stockades or Burman troops in those parts. In short, from the account of these *friendly* natives, who were so anxious to throw themselves into our arms, we were to find it

simply a party of pleasure, muskets and ammunition being, in such a case, merely incumbrances. This overture seemed to promise such a favourable opportunity of opening a friendly intercourse with the people of the country that we immediately embraced it, and, that no time might be lost, a detachment, consisting of 200 of the 1st Madras European Regiment and about the same number of sepoy from the 18th and 34th M.N.I., under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Kelly, of the former corps, was ordered to embark in boats and proceed up the creek on the following morning.

The flank companies of the "Lambs," making up 200 rank and file, were detained for the above duty, and I was permitted to join the light company as a volunteer on the occasion; for, pacific as was the prospect held out to us, it was nevertheless whispered that the point for which we were bound was not utterly defenceless, and in a land where stockades seemed almost as "plenty as blackberries," there appeared every chance of our falling in with one somewhere or other. This was not the only time that I was green enough to volunteer; for in such a light, and with truth, this species of zeal is often considered. Let a man be killed or

wounded in the execution of his *duty*, and in his proper place, in his own company, and in the ranks of his own regiment, he is honoured or sympathized with, as the case may be; but, if he falls a victim to his taste for volunteering—in other words, doing other people's duty—why he is looked upon as little better than an ambitious donkey and not entitled to a particle of credit. There are, doubtless, at times, certain great emergencies when it is highly proper to volunteer; but for young officers to thrust themselves into dangers, where *duty does not call them*, is morally unjustifiable; and if a man loses his life in such a way, it cannot but be considered as a species of suicide. Life is far too valuable a gift to be risked without an adequate motive. I throw out these reflections on *volunteering* for the benefit of young aspirants to fame. Far be it from me to check their professional ardour; but I wish to show them that this excess of zeal brings but a poor return, and that, if any one of them should chance to fall whilst under the influence of a volunteering fit, he must not look for much posthumous honour, but be prepared to go down, as the poet sings,—

To the vile earth from whence he sprung,
Un-wept, un-honoured, and un-sung!

On a former occasion I have eulogized our grenadiers, which was all natural enough, that being my own company; but they deserved all the praise I could give them, and more too, for their conduct in the field was every admirable. Outwardly to be sure, they made no great figure, for, in common with all the regiment, they were shabbily clothed at that period, thanks to the indifference of the heads of the Madras army to the appearance of the best and oldest corps in their service. And now a word of the light company to which I attached myself *pro tempore*. Our light bobs were of the right stamp, and well fitted for jungle warfare—smart, active, high-spirited young fellows, up to every thing, and who would clamber over a stockade like cats. They were, in fact, all that British light infantry should be. They were well commanded by old Ben H——, a veteran sportsman (long since numbered with the dead,) who, though much dilapidated in frame from the effects of numberless falls whilst hunting, most of his limbs having been fractured once or twice, nevertheless retained all the pluck of health, and could still do good service in the tented field. Such were my comrades in the excursion in question.

The detachment embarked at the King's Wharf

about eight or nine on the morning of the 8th, and were stowed away, partly in row-boats, armed with carronades at the bows, and partly in flat-bottomed boats, manned by lascars from the shipping, whilst many men-of-war's boats accompanied us. We soon crossed the river, and with the assistance of the tide, which was running up fast, rapidly ascended the Dalla Creek. This stream, which, though called a creek, must have been seventy or eighty yards broad, united with the main river immediately opposite Rangoon, and just below the town of Maindhue, the capital, if it may be so called, of the Dalla district, and hence the name of Dalla, which we invariably gave it. The direction of the creek from its mouth must have been nearly south-west, and it probably communicated with one of the many mouths of the mighty Irrawaddy that flow into the sea on the southern coast of Pegue—the extensive tract thus intersected being, for the most part, low and flat, subject consequently to frequent inundations during the rainy season, and much of it being overgrown with an impervious jungle of stunted trees or low brushwood, the general character of that part of the country, resembling, as I conceive, the Sunderbunds of Bengal, formed in like manner by the many

mouths of the Ganges. The course of the Dalla Creek was very winding, and its banks steep and muddy, whilst on either side nothing was visible save the underwood, of dank and luxuriant growth, which overhung the water, and opposed an impenetrable barrier against all attempts at a landing. Our flotilla kept tolerably well together, preceded by two or three men-of-war's boats, as a sort of advance-guard, in one of which was Colonel Kelly and his staff. The sun shone brightly that day, for the monsoon was on the wane, and a gay and gallant scene must have been presented by the floating column as it passed rapidly up the stream with its colours flying, for the scarlet uniform of the British cannot but heighten the effect of any picture of which it may form a part. The day chosen for our expedition was the Sabbath; but this, though to be regretted, was unavoidable, it being one of the stern necessities of war to make no distinction of days, for obvious reasons. So it was in Burmah; and many amongst us, it is to be feared, would have overlooked Sunday altogether, had we not been reminded of it in the day's *Orders*. Some few there doubtless were who reflected seriously on the matter, and whose thoughts would naturally revert from the wild and warlike

spectacle then before them to the soft sabbath scenes of distant Albion, where every one that desires it may enjoy the privilege of worshipping God in quietness and peace; but such instances, it is to be feared, were rare, and indeed it must be confessed that, as regards any outward semblance of religion, we Christians, as we called ourselves, were very far behind the heathen nation with which we were contending. But "*tempora mutantur*," and I now acknowledge with pleasure, that Christianity is no longer a dead letter in our British Indian army.

Our little fleet had scarcely proceeded four miles up the creek, when, having suddenly rounded a point, we were startled not a little at discovering a stockade three or four hundred yards a-head of us, constructed at a sharp turn of the river on its right bank, and of course completely commanding it! We had been treacherously dealt with, it was at once evident; but the trick was a clumsy one, and could have availed the enemy but little. Our destination was described to be at the distance of twelve miles from Rangoon, but we had not proceeded far when we fell in with this serious obstruction. "Hang the guides! Hang the guides!" was now vociferated from all quarters; and had the sol-

diers been permitted to follow their own feelings in the matter, they would have made short work of the two poor wretches who had volunteered to lead us into the trap at the risk of their own lives. They were not summarily disposed of, however, but I am inclined to think one or both of them were executed under the sentence of a court-martial not long after. The flotilla had hardly hove in sight, when the water was splashed about on all sides, whilst simultaneously huge puffs of smoke were seen to burst from the stockade, closely followed by the booming report of cannon. The enemy had, in fact, promptly opened upon us with grape, and were not long in getting the range of the men-of-war's boats that had preceded us by a few yards, in some of which, from the confusion that was soon discernible, it was evident that blood had been shed to some extent. From the rapid manner in which the tide carried us up we were all, however, soon within the influence of the enemy's fire; but previous to making a dash at the place certain preliminaries had of course to be made, and to effect this the "halt!" was sounded and the boats were collected close to the left bank, as much as practicable under shelter; but of this there was little or none, for it was "a clear

stage, and no favour," and we were now fairly in for it. A few hasty preparations were made, and orders issued relative to the mode of attack to be pursued; but any plan of operations upon such a sudden emergency, and under the enemy's guns, would necessarily be but a crude affair. This accomplished, the bugles sounded the "advance," which immediately pealed from boat to boat, and away we drifted again with the stream, in the direction of the foe, and under a hot fire of grape and round shot, the former pattering about us on all sides, and the cannon-balls ploughing up the water most furiously.

The shots were now telling amongst us fearfully, and our loss was aggravated by the conduct of the native boatmen, who, not being seasoned to this sort of work, ceased to ply their oars, and endeavoured by every means in their power to check the progress of the boats, thereby increasing instead of lessening the danger. In some instances they had absolutely let go their anchors! but the cables were as quickly severed by the officers present, a sharp knife or a sword being a ready and effectual remedy in such a case: Lieutenant K——, of our grenadiers, had occasion to apply his knife in this manner, if I remember rightly. There was a strong disposition to come to an anchor manifested in the

boat I was in, but this movement was soon overruled by the strong arms of our light bobs, aided by their officers. As we neared the works, we were further exposed to a heavy fire of musketry, not only from the stockade, but from the jungle on either side of the creek, and, to crown our difficulties and dangers, we discerned as we approached a second stockade directly opposite the other on the reverse bank, which immediately opened upon us, and thus were we exposed to a heavy cross fire from both sides of the river! Our firelocks in the meanwhile were not idle, for, unlike shore operations, when an attacking party is only delayed by returning a fire, we could now blaze away at leisure, peppering the enemy's wooden walls with musketry, and sweeping the jungle on either bank with grape and canister from our carronades. At this game, however, the enemy had very much the advantage of us; probably we made the most noise, but our shot had but little effect, so well were they protected behind their stockades. We, on the contrary, had not the least shelter, but were fairly exposed to their showers of shot, which committed sad havoc in our crowded boats: the brains of one poor fellow in my boat were spattered about in all directions by a grape-shot.

The tide soon carried our flotilla to within forty

or fifty yards of the stockades, which nevertheless were but imperfectly discernible amidst the clouds of smoke that arose from both sides. The works were strongly constructed of timber, if I remember rightly, and within eight or ten yards of the water; their flank and rear were, as usual, shrouded in jungle, the graceful and luxuriant bamboo, which grows in thick clumps, overhanging the very walls, and adding much to the protection of the place by the obstruction it offered to access. The river face of both the stockades was defended by an abbatis, firmly and thickly planted; indeed, few of the Burmese field-works were entirely devoid of this species of defence, which we ever found most awkward obstacles, especially to our sepoy, whose feet are only protected by sandals. An Oriental sandal differs widely, however, from that of a European lady, which is all ribbon. I should hastily describe it as a thick sole of buffaloe leather, attached to the foot by thongs of the same material. By the natives themselves, who are wholly unprotected by either sandal or trowsers, an abbatis must be considered exceedingly formidable. For the general reader it may be as well to add that an abbatis is a deep fence, generally formed of branches of trees, with the ends sharpened, which

are firmly planted in the ground, and pointing outwards. As before stated the stockades were opposite each other, and constructed at a curve of the creek, so that the guns of one of them could sweep the water for some distance ; this, the main work, was on the right bank and to our left, the creek having narrowed at this point to about fifty yards. Here and there the ugly copper-coloured phiz of a Burman was visible, peering at us over the top of the stockade, whilst there was a respectable display of shining spears and glittering barrels. For the former we cared not a rush, but the latter we not only saw and heard, but were made to feel, and that most severely.

The first object was to carry the main stockade by assault, and to effect this a landing was ordered on the right bank, in the best manner practicable ; for anything like regularity and formation was quite out of the question where thick jungle extended to the water's edge. The boats for the most part drew up under the bank of a small creek that runs into the main stream, at the distance of twenty or thirty yards from the stockade. Here the troops landed up to their middles in mud, and, scrambling up the slippery bank and through the bushes, pushed on in the direction of the enemy with unity of purpose, if not with

unity of action. Some of the boats, however, landed their freights farther back; and this was the case with the one I was in, for our lascars were so completely paralysed by the enemy's fire, that to expedite matters we ran the boat ashore, and landed up to our waists in mud and water. There was then a slimy bank to ascend, and never were soldiers in a dirtier plight than we were upon that occasion, some of us being almost cased in mud, which was peculiarly tenacious. Eighteen years have glided away since these little events transpired, yet many of the trivial incidents connected with them are as fresh in my recollection as ever: they are the milestones, land-marks, or connecting links on the road of memory, which, instead of being worn out or loosened, seem only to be more firmly rivetted by the rough hand of Old Father Time.

In scrambling up the muddy bank before alluded to, my foot slipped, and I well remember to have been assisted in the ascent by the hand of poor Fergusson, then of the light company. He was subsequently transferred to the grenadiers, for which his height better fitted him, and fell by my side some time after, at the capture of Sittang, pierced by two musket-balls in the forehead. I mention him thus particularly, as in *ap-*

pearance and *manner* he was far superior to the common herd with whom he mixed, for, as far as externals went, few gentlemen were superior to him. Being the handsomest and smartest man in the regiment, he was our fogle-man, as well as pattern-man, and so *ornamental* was he considered that he was constantly transferred from one flank company to the other, whenever an opportunity offered, through the absence of his captain for the time being. Despite his handsome exterior, however, Fergusson was a genuine "Lamb" in his love for the *arrack* bottle; consequently, he was ever in trouble, and in garrison passed much of his time between the barrack guard and solitary cell. This brief memorial of poor Fergusson may not be without interest to such of my old comrades as may fall in with it.

Having effected a landing, each pushed on in the direction of the stockade, forcing his way through the thick bushy barrier as he best could. At this point the enemy's fire had much slackened, though from the opposite side of the water their balls came as thickly as ever. I soon emerged from the jungle, and found myself in a partially clear spot, near an angle of the works, and at a distance of fifteen or twenty yards from them, followed by two or three of the light com-

pany. Here we fell in with a party of sailors, armed with muskets, who had just landed from the boats, and were blazing away literally in all directions. Their shot were, of course, intended for the enemy, who, I soon discerned, were retreating in large numbers from the stockade across an open swampy space in its rear. They issued apparently from a narrow gateway at the further end; then, crossing this cleared spot, they were safe from pursuit in their native forest. This dusky stream was the object of the sailors' fire, than which, it struck me at the time, nothing could have been more harmless, for many appeared to discharge their firelocks in the air at an angle of 45, the main point seemingly being to rid themselves of their ammunition! Jack is at home in the management of a long 32-pounder, or in handling a cutlass, but *Brown Bess* is a puzzler to him.

It has been shown that anything like a well-combined attack against this place was, from the circumstances of the case, quite impracticable, for many of us, as just stated, had to land and to struggle up to it as well as we could. From the moment, however, the enemy were seen in retreat, it was clear that the place was our own, and that some of our people had forced an en-

trance by some means or other. The moment I saw the enemy issuing from the gateway and making for the jungle, I pressed towards them as fast as my legs would carry me, calling out to the men to follow, till I was hoarse, and urging them to cut off the enemy's retreat. No lads could have been more willing, but the arms, ammunition, and accoutrements that are tacked on, even to a *light* bob, quite incapacitate him from keeping pace with his officer, when the latter is determined to push a-head. The ground, moreover, was a complete swamp, and therefore a sad clog upon light infantry movements. Only two or three men had come up; and there were the enemy streaming out of the place at the distance of about one hundred yards from us! Nothing could have been more tantalizing. I had fondly hoped to have immortalized myself, or at least to have flourished in a G.O. (nothing more substantial, alas! is attainable by an humble subaltern) for being instrumental in effectually cutting off the enemy's retreat, thereby occasioning them a most severe loss by detaining them in the works till our troops pressed fairly on their rear; and most assuredly such would have been the result had there been a compact body of twenty or even a dozen men to have enabled me to effect

it. But the Fates were adverse, and the manœuvre would not succeed. Most of the men were still far behind, but struggling through the mud as fast as they could, and keeping up a desultory fire as they advanced. Some of the enemy I saw fall from the effects of our shot, who were immediately picked up and hurried off by their comrades, but ere we could come within reach they were all snug in the jungle, and as the last man disappeared amongst the bushes so vanished all my dreams of distinction !

This vain endeavour to cut off the foe was witnessed by some of our people from the inside of the stockade, which was now fairly our own ; and I and my party joined them by the narrow entrance through which our prey had just escaped. A minute or two after a group of us were assembled near an angle of the stockade, talking over recent events, when there occurred one of those painful scenes which naturally result from warring with barbarians : I would willingly forget it, but never shall. Whilst we were talking, all at once there was a hue and cry, and an unfortunate Burman, who from some cause or other had been left in the rear, bounded past us and made a spring at the stockade, endeavouring of course to escape ; the poor fellow

made two or three desperate bounds, but they were unsuccessful. We—that is, the officers—would gladly have saved him, but our hot-headed soldiers were not to be restrained; they were still fresh from the excitement of the assault, and shot after shot was fired at a murderous distance, but apparently without effect. With each shot his efforts to clear the works, which were very high, seemed redoubled; and truly it was fearful sight to see the poor fellow's frantic struggle to save himself, even after he had been wounded. At length a ball pierced him in a vital part, and he literally rolled over at our feet; and to make sure work of it, I am by no means certain that two or three bayonets did not follow pretty closely upon the ball! I forget how he was armed, or indeed if at the time he had any arms at all (at such junctures, it has been truly said that soldiers are blind); but he was a fine, athletic fellow, and would probably have been more than a match for any of us singly. It was a sad affair, though no uncommon case in those days, it is to be feared.

None of the troops had been landed at the stockade on the opposite bank of the stream, but the firing having ceased from the period of our carrying the main work, we of course inferred

that the enemy had evacuated it. But to satisfy ourselves that such was the case, a party of us youngsters pushed off in a canoe, without waiting for orders, and crossed over. Luckily there was no one to dispute the passage, for, as we hoped, the place was untenanted. The enemy had retreated by the rear of the work, which was but slightly defended, whilst its front or river face was very strong. This in many places was quite studded with grape-shot, but the interior of neither stockade suffered much from our fire, and but few of the enemy were found killed in them. Our loss, on the contrary, had been heavy, amounting to 76 officers and men, killed and wounded—a large proportion of our small force, which in soldiers did not exceed 400 men. Some gallant seamen, however, were reckoned amongst the casualties. Of the detachment of the 1st Madras European regiment, there were twenty-six men *hors de combat*. One of our officers, Lieutenant Grubb, was severely wounded by a musket-ball, which smashed the handle of his sword and shattered his hand seriously: he carried the effects of it to his grave, to which we consigned him not many months after.

When the action was over, the flotilla were all drawn up close to the beach, and many of

us, moved partly perhaps by curiosity, but more, it is to be hoped, by sympathy, went on board to visit the wounded, and take a sort of general survey of the damage we had received at the hands of the enemy; and it must be acknowledged that, taking every credit to ourselves for the empty stockades that had fallen into our hands, the Burmese had much the best of the bargain. As we stepped from boat to boat, the scenes that presented themselves were very painful, for our killed and wounded comrades were here concentrated, as it were, into a comparatively narrow space, and we could see them nearly all at a glance. Many were dead, others dying, and in the decked boats the blood that flowed in streams from the wounded literally formed puddles, which, undulating with the motion of the boats, washed their decks, and rendered walking no easy matter. The quantity of blood visible on all sides I well remember to have been striking; and it may perhaps be accounted for from the fact of most of the wounds having been inflicted by grape-shot, which the unprofessional reader should know is very much larger than a *grape*, being equal in weight to three or four musket-balls.

The "Dalla Creek stockades" fell so early in

the day (before noon), that we fully expected to push on a little further, and take a few more ; but our commander thought we had achieved enough for one day, and gave us to understand that we were to return after we had refreshed ourselves. This decision, founded doubtless on cogent reasons, grievously disappointed many of us, who fondly looked to add another victory or two to the day's work ; for, being apparently in a likely country for stockades, (to use a sporting term,) it seemed a pity to return without having our fill of glory, the love of which, like that of money, seems with soldiers to acquire fresh stimulus after each victory. We were, however, compelled to rest upon our laurels, and officers and men were soon dispersed in knots about the stockade, agreeably employed in emptying our havresacks, or talking over the stirring events of the morning, under the cheering influence of a cigar, which, to a sub. of those days, was almost meat and drink. Indeed, we most of us looked upon *the weed* as an indispensable necessary of life ; and truly it was a cheerful and, in moderation, not unhealthful companion on the outlying picket, where it not only helped us to while away the tedious midnight hour, and to chew the cud of reflection, but to dissipate the noxious vapours

in which, on such occasions, we were frequently enveloped; thus, it is hardly too much to say, proving a source of moral as well as physical benefit. Tobacco, however, like all other good gifts, is liable to abuse, and the practice of puffing away all day at the rate of thirty, forty, or even fifty cigars (no uncommon thing in India, where subs. are plenty and chiroots cheap,) accompanied by copious potations of *brandy pawney*, cannot be too much reprobated, as tending alike to the destruction of body and soul. On this occasion I was associated with poor Victor B—— and one or two others; the former has long passed away from this scene of action. What we had in the way of provender I do not now remember, but I have a distinct recollection of its being washed down, whatever it was, by some of Hodgson's pale ale—a matter of sufficient moment to stamp itself indelibly on the tablet of memory. Whilst thus employed—in a Burman hut inside the stockade, and which commanded a view of the water—we were startled by the sudden appearance of another flotilla, also from the direction of Rangoon. This puzzled us a little at first, but on its approach we found it to contain H.M. 41st regiment, which had been promptly despatched to us as a reinforcement, as soon as the firing

was heard—for, fighting not having been calculated upon by the general, our detachment was weak, and a reverse was apprehended; but the “Lambs,” though few in number, were stout of heart and strong in all the attributes of soldiers, and many a joke our lads had at the expense of their comrades of the 41st, for having come “too late for the fair.” Major Chambers commanded the 41st upon this occasion (long since, alas! dead of cholera); but finding their assistance was not required, the regiment immediately returned to Rangoon, whither we followed them as soon as all the wounded had been looked after.

One of our sergeants was wounded this day in a singular manner, or rather there was a singular circumstance connected with his wound. He had been literally shot *through the head*, and yet, strange to say, he was not only alive, but treated the matter lightly, and upon disembarking insisted on marching up to the lines with his company, the distance of a mile! The ball had entered below one temple and passed out below the other, thus going through the head, at least the lower part of it; a trifle higher, and of course the result would have been very different. As it was, the palate was seriously injured, and after a time the poor fellow could hardly articulate, and con-

sequently was invalided. Another man of ours received a ball in front, on one of his ribs, which, following the course of the bone, lodged in his back, without going through him. On another occasion a corporal of our grenadiers received a ball under his chin, which he immediately spat out of his mouth into his hand, and held up to me!

The capture of the "Dalla Creek stockades" was thought much of at the time, the affair having been the most severe in which the troops had been engaged, and they deserved additional credit for the determined manner in which they opposed the efforts of the lascars to check the progress of the boats. The result, however, *ought* to have been different, for if the enemy had stood their ground firmly, and continued a steady fire upon us after we had landed, our numbers would have been much too weak to have carried the works by assault, to say nothing of our scattered and unconnected state at the time of debarkation. On some points there is a resemblance between this affair and the "capture of Sittang." In both cases the exploit was achieved by the flank companies of 'The Lambs,' and some native troops; in both cases, the numbers employed and the amount of killed and

wounded were nearly the same; and in both cases we were exposed to a most heavy fire, and conveyed to our destination by water; but here the parallel ceases, for in the more material points there is no comparison.

It now only remains to add, that a month had scarcely elapsed from the period referred to when, the "Dalla Creek stockades" having risen again, Phoenix-like, from their ashes, they were a second time attacked and captured by a small force under Major Evans, of the Madras army, consisting of fifty of our men and a few sepoy, with but trifling loss.

CHAP. VII.

MILITARY FLOGGING—FALSE ALARMS—QUARTERS—BURMAH PRIESTS, &C.

Few subjects have undergone more discussion in these days of reform than that of “flogging in the army.” Effort after effort has been made, hitherto in vain, by liberal-minded and humane men, in Parliament as well as out of it, for the abrogation of this practice—an ignominious one most assuredly, when we consider the tales it tells to our European rivals of the immoral habits of the lower classes of our highly-favoured land. That drunkenness is the crying sin of the labouring portion of the community is undeniable: the Christian philosopher must determine why religion and inebriety should both flourish equally in the same soil. Such being the case, and drunk-

eness being the parent of most crimes, it is maintained by the defenders of the system that the discipline of the British army can only be upheld by the cat. Indeed, not long since, both in army and navy, a good flogging was looked upon as a kind of moral panacea. There has, however, been a manifest improvement of late years in this respect, and the flogging system is now carried on to a very limited extent, compared to what it was in "the good old times."

I am by no means prepared to say that corporal punishment should be at once discontinued in the British service; but I think it should never be resorted to except in cases of theft, which, being the meanest and most degrading of all crimes, at least in the eyes of the community, should be visited in a corresponding manner. The lash is a most unsuitable remedy for drunkenness, by which, at times, many a high-spirited and honourable soldier has been overtaken: it may be taken as a general rule, with but few exceptions, that a soldier who has once figured at the halberds loses all self-respect, and as the blood trickles down his lacerated back it carries away all professional zeal and every high and honourable motive of action.

The foregoing remarks are merely prefatory to

an incident I am about to relate, which exhibits in a painful light the mischievous effects of this practice. Whilst our regiment was lying at Rangoon, some time in 1824, two privates of the light company, named Dove and Leman, were cruising about the town, after having pulled somewhat too freely at the arrack bottle. In their wanderings they unluckily fell in with Gen. —, then commanding the Madras division. They pretended to be ignorant of his rank, and would not salute him. I forget now precisely what passed, but the men were culpable, and the general arraigned them before a regimental court-martial, appearing himself to give evidence against them. They were found guilty and sentenced to receive a certain number of lashes *in the usual manner*—probably 200 each, for in those days, whatever the offence might be, it was too generally visited by a flogging. The culprits were fine, high-spirited young men, and though in this instance they had grievously offended against martial law, they were generally well-behaved. On the morrow, at an early hour, the regiment paraded for punishment. We formed three sides of a square, in a small cleared space in the vicinity of our lines, hemmed in on every side by jungle. Here all was ready, the

triangle being the most prominent feature in the scene, whilst beside it was drawn up a formidable line of drummers, in their shirt sleeves (the usual mode of doing business in India, on account of the heat), with the drum-major at their head, provided with pencil and book, to note the number of lashes; for the practice was then, and still is, I conclude, for each drummer to give twenty-five lashes, so that the unfortunate culprit should receive them *fresh and fresh*. And now every eye was eagerly turned to where the prisoners should have been. "Where are they?" was asked on all sides. We were not kept long in suspense, for it was now ascertained that one of them (Leman) had shot himself during the night, thus preferring death to the ignominy of a public flagellation. Poor fellow ! his case excited much sympathy, the more especially as, at the earnest solicitation of the general officer who had brought him forward, the sentence was to have been remitted; but the result of a court-martial is not promulgated till the regiment is assembled on parade the following day. I have good cause to remember this painful incident, having been one of the members of the court, and I now record it as a mournful example of the evils attending the indiscriminate use of the lash, which should only

fall on the back of the mean-spirited thief, who has no character to lose.

In bygone days, with sorrow be it said, there was a monstrous consumption of whipcord amongst "the Lambs." The backs of some men after a time became so hardened that flogging was a matter of indifference; and one of our "lambkins," on the occasion of receiving his periodical allowance of cat, is reported to have turned round to the officers and exclaimed, with a laugh, "Well! I get my three thousand a-year, which is more than any of you can say!" The heart and the back, under the influence of the lash, are gradually but simultaneously hardened, till, after a time, the operation is considered by many a mere bagatelle.

Seldom were troops more harassed than ours were in Ava, and not the least of their *désagré-mens* were the false alarms to which they were constantly subjected at the earlier period of the campaigns. Night after night were we startled from our slumbers by heavy firing on some point or other, generally in the direction of the river, though it not unfrequently happened that some Johnny Raw, not long dismissed from drill, whilst keeping sentry on an outpost, would mistake a wandering bullock, or perhaps a shadow, for a

Burman, when a report of his musket would not unfrequently be followed up by the whole line of sentries. These "false alarms," occurring as they generally did at night, were not only barren in glory, but pregnant with discomfort.

It must be borne in mind, that thunder, lightning, and rain, in a tropical climate, and during what is called in India the south-west monsoon, are totally unlike such phenomena in our latitudes. One whose ear is only accustomed to the low and distant rumbling of English thunder can form no conception of its noise and grandeur in the East. The lightning too is proportionably terrific and incessant, while, as Byron sings—

—"the big rain comes dancing to the earth,"

not by drops, however, but by bucketsful!

On one night in particular the monsoon raged in all its glory, and the jarring elements formed a very chaos over the heads of the British troops at Rangoon, who, in spite of the din, slept securely, if not soundly. I occupied, with two brother-officers, a very decent sort of tenement for the times, once the abode of some poonghis (priests), and though the monotonous dripping of the rain, as it oozed through the crazy roof upon the floor in half-a-dozen different directions, afforded very audible evidence that our quarters were not con-

structed on the water-proof principle, still, as long as we escaped the drops, we could doze comfortably or listen with apparent indifference to the warring of the elements without. It was past midnight, when we were first startled from our slumbers by a rattling fire of musketry in the direction of the Great Pagoda. This music was varied after a time by the less frequent, but far louder, report of cannon, serving as a sort of bass to the treble music of the musketry. The latter was nothing new, and in some measure fell unheeded on the ear; but to the cannon's voice we listened "*arrectis auribus*," as their iron mouths seldom speak without good cause. These reports were quickly followed up by bugles, sounding the General Assembly, whilst the now familiar Long Roll, "when the drum beat at dead of night," roused us all from our pallets, as if by magic, under the full impression that the whole force of the enemy was coming down upon us. We were not long in falling in, though from the pitchy darkness, which we endeavoured partly to dispel by torches, there was a good deal of confusion. Amidst thunder, lightning, and rain, to the music of cannon, musketry, drums, and bugles, the gallant line was formed, though its direction could only be traced by the occasional gleaming of the

bayonets as the lightning played amongst them ; and there we stood, heroes that we were, over our ankles in water, for a considerable time, not doubting but that we were on the eve of great events. But all this noise, and stir, and drenching, was destined to end in nothing, for by the time we were well soaked to the skin, an aide-de-camp galloped up to our colonel, telling him that it was “ a false alarm,” and that we were to return to our quarters !

Our outlying pickets, however, were frequently attacked, under cover of the night, in a very furtive manner ; it was no uncommon thing, on visiting one's advanced sentries, at daybreak, to find one of them dead across his path, felled by the sure though stealthy blow of a Burman's blade, for the bushy nature of the ground would allow our treacherous foe to creep up close to us unperceived. At times they would find their way in a party between the sentries, and firing a volley into the tent where the main body of the picket were buried asleep, would throw them into momentary confusion, and thereby get possession of a few stand of arms. On one occasion a detached post from our picket was attacked in this manner, consisting of a sergeant and twelve men, when the enemy succeeded in killing one man and se-

curing seven firelocks. When sentries fell, as before related, they were generally stripped of their jackets and cross-belts, which, being looked upon as trophies, were, I believe, generally despatched to Ava, to gladden the sight of his Golden-Footed Majesty.

Our troops were much better lodged during their sojourn at Rangoon than any of us could have anticipated, for in their habitations, as well as their mode of living, the Burmans have a much better idea of comfort, according to a European's definition of the term, than the natives of Hindostan, higher though the latter doubtless are in the scale of civilization. The aforesaid advantages on the part of the Burmese, from which we so much benefitted, are of course mainly owing to that freedom from the trammels of caste which distinguishes the Buddhist from the Hindoo. The mild and liberal doctrines of Buddha require none of those severe restrictions so absurdly enjoined by the Brahminical code; consequently, whilst the effeminate Hindoo is limited to his insipid diet of rice, in his narrow mud hovel, the jolly disciple of Gaudna, subject to no such self-denial, may revel unrestrained amidst all the good things bounteous nature has provided. It is true that Buddhism inter-

dicts the slaying of certain animals : but it was, nevertheless, very evident to us that this divine injunction was but imperfectly observed. Animal food was not interdicted, though the slaying of animals was, and consequently *accidental* deaths were of very common occurrence. This substantial difference in their mode of diet was very apparent in their robust and muscular frame, which contrasted most strongly with that of our sepoys. Indeed, the general build of a Burman denoted great strength, their bodies being long, and their legs short and somewhat bandy, whilst the calf of the leg and thigh were a compact mass of muscle. The physical superiority of a Burman is manifest at a glance, in no one point bearing any resemblance to the native of India. There may be nothing to justify such an opinion ; but to form one purely from appearances, we should pronounce a Burman to be a cross-bred between a Chinese and a Malay, with a most Tartaric physiognomy. It must be confessed, however, that, in the article of diet, they were not over nice, greedily devouring anything that chance might throw in their way. A dead horse, or a dead buffalo, whether it had been dead a day or a fortnight, was eaten seemingly with equal relish. Lizards, snakes, and

such like reptiles, were also much in demand as articles of food amongst the poorer classes. I had shot a large snake, on one occasion, whilst beating for game, that measured six feet in length, and, to my astonishment, it was immediately pounced upon by some of the natives near us as a prize, doubtless intending to make a curry of it. Another instance I remember of their predilection for snakes. We had encamped one morning after a hot and weary march, on the banks of a nullah, and the officers were in the mess-tent at breakfast, when a group of soldiers approached, dragging up a huge snake as big round as a man's thigh, and measuring fourteen feet in length. It was a boa constrictor, or rock snake, and had been caught napping on the banks of the nullah by one of our sergeants, who boldly pinned its head to the ground with his halbert. The scaly prize was immediately made over to some Burman epicures, who begged very hard for it, and a rare feast they doubtless had upon the monster, which I dare say, after all, is as good eating as a conger eel, if our prejudices would but allow us to make the trial.

I have said that we occupied very tolerable quarters during our stay at Rangoon. There were numberless picturesque and commodious re-

sidences on the high road between the town and the pagoda, well shaded by umbrageous fruit trees. These garden houses mostly appertained to the priesthood, and were called *kioums*, or monasteries, many of the priests, who in this country are sworn to celibacy, residing together after the manner of monks, and employing their time in the offices of religion and education of youth. These buildings were usually constructed of wood, and tiled, and were frequently large enough to accommodate two or three companies of troops. They were raised upon posts six or seven feet from the ground, and entered by a wide flight of wooden steps, with handsomely carved balustrades, ornamented with a variety of grotesque figures, such as sphinxes, griffins, &c. &c. The roofs of these buildings were arranged much in the Chinese style, one overtopping the other, and at times terminating in a spire, whilst an open gallery, or platform, usually occupied at least one or two sides of the buildings, which was the very place of all others for enjoying a cigar and a cup of coffee in the cool of the evening, sitting in a camp chair *en déshabille*, with legs Yankee-fashion, resting against the balustrade. Many a luxurious moment have I thus passed, after a fatiguing day's work, solacing mind and

body with a fragrant Chinsurah cheroot, on some of those bright, tranquil, moonlight nights which are the greatest attractions of a tropical clime, and which greatly help to compensate for solar inconveniences. The space underneath these houses was unoccupied, save by cats, dogs and poultry; but, when we invaders changed places with the rightful owners, this lower region served very well as offices for our sable domestics, and stabling for such as could boast of a tattoo pony. Such an association may sound strange in England, but our admirable Indian servants, with their simple and contented habits, are a very different race from the pampered and ungrateful menials of this favoured land of liberty and luxury. We were not all, however, equally well lodged, for as most of the abodes referred to were appropriated, on account of their size, as barracks for the men, many of the officers were obliged to be content with inferior accommodation.

The commoner description of dwelling amongst the Burmans was constructed, with few exceptions, entirely of bamboo, and roofed with dry grass. Though comparatively small, they were generally divided into several compartments, and were by no means ill-adapted for comfort. They were not generally raised more than two or three

feet from the ground, and were entered by a broad step or ladder. The partitions were formed of bamboo, beat out and platted together in a peculiarly neat manner, whilst the floors were made of the same material, cut into long strips nearly an inch broad, and fastened close together upon transverse beams. These frail and highly elastic floors were anything but agreeable or secure, and constantly broke down beneath the heavy tramp of an European boot or shoe, when down would go the leg into the mire and filth of the lower regions! The noble bamboo of Ava is one of the finest and most valuable of its natural productions, and is applied to an infinite variety of uses, even to supplying materials for a pickle or a curry, for which purpose the tender shoots are used.

The first house I inhabited at Rangoon, in common with two other senior officers of my company, consisted only of one long room—they occupying the two ends, and I the centre. My chums, however, being both married men, had better ideas of comfort than I had, and accordingly had partitioned off their allotments by a temporary screen, leaving me the middle space. Here I arranged my bullock trunk, cot, camp chair, table, &c., according to my limited notions

of comfort ; whilst sword, sash, pistols, belts and red jackets, hung suspended from the wall, ready for action. A rug served me for a mattress, and my boat-cloak for a coverlet, and, underneath the cot, the trusty fowling-piece was ever near at hand. Such was the general disposition of my goods and chattels. Our residence was raised seven or eight feet from the ground, and approached by a most awkward pair of steps. At the summit of these, and serving as a sort of ante-room to our sleeping apartment, was a spacious platform, roofed over, if I remember rightly, but very imperfectly floored, the boards having been here and there made free with as firewood. This was also our banquetting hall, for here we feasted on commissariat rations, and enjoyed a cigar in the cool of the evening.

Books being a scarce commodity, and shooting in the neighbourhood of the camp being interdicted (though there was no resisting a sly shot at a dove or paddy-bird when an opportunity offered), the subs. of the army, when off duty, found the time hang very heavily on their hands. I was no exception to the generality, being quite as idle as my neighbours. My favourite resource *pour passer le temps* was in throwing a spear, at which exercise, by dint of practice upon the

numerous pariah dogs with which our lines were infested, I had become very expert, in common, doubtless, with many others. "Dog-spearing" may sound in English ears as a strange and somewhat ignoble pastime, for more cruel it certainly was not than spearing a wild hog or shooting a partridge; but, in truth, like most other sports and recreations, it was the natural result of circumstances. Spears were found in abundance at every stockade that was captured, of every variety of size and shape, so that all hands, camp-followers included, were soon well supplied with them, and hurling the javelin became quite a fashionable amusement. The dogs I have alluded to were most numerous, and soon proved a serious nuisance. The Burmese appeared very fond of these animals, as well as of cats, many of which were attached to each family; the latter, by-the-way, had for the most part little or no tail, that pride and ornament of the pussies; but whether this was a natural peculiarity, or whether the poor things had been *curtailed* in their youth, I leave it for the naturalist to discover. The dogs were of that genus familiar to Anglo-Indians as the *pariah*; that is, of the lowest caste. They are timid, treacherous,

ugly brutes, being unlike any breed in this sporting country. Their colour is generally a reddish brown, but they are also white and black. They carry a long curly tail, and while in form they bear some resemblance to the greyhound, but are without any of its symmetry, their habits and general appearance remind us strongly of the fox and jackal, to which they doubtless bear some relationship. When the town and its extensive suburbs were vacated by the inhabitants, these animals remained behind, and stuck to their old quarters, though at the risk of starvation; and they soon became such an evil, as well from their foraging propensities as from their noise by night, that we looked upon them as a legitimate object of persecution, and to spear a pariah was really to do the camp some service, by ridding it of a thief.

When dogs were scarce, we sometimes would throw at a mark for hours together. By dint of practice I had become very expert in catching a spear in my hand when hurled directly at me, in which somewhat hazardous amusement, on one occasion, I met with rather a serious accident, in the following manner: I had instilled into one of my sable domestics a similar taste for the use of

the spear, and in leisure moments we amused ourselves in throwing it from one to the other, I catching it in my hand as it reached me in the manner before described, though this point my comrade could not achieve. I had thrown the spear in my usual manner, which he immediately picked up, and after advancing a few steps to shorten the distance, hurled it back for me to catch *en passant*. Had the weapon been well aimed, anomalous as it may sound, no harm could have ensued ; but there happened to be a tree overhanging me, and the spear being awkwardly thrown, struck a branch, and then glancing off, entered my mouth on the right side, and there it stuck, the shaft quivering, whilst the head of the spear, which happily was a very light one, after lacerating the cheek and jaw, was partly visible externally. Thus was I ignobly transfixed by the clumsy hand of my black servant, and the canine race were well nigh avenged on me by the very weapon that had so often drank their blood. The instant I was wounded I seized the spear with both hands and drew it out, and from the quantity of blood that followed I began to think that the jugular vein was cut. A surgeon was fortunately near at hand, who soon ascertained

that no serious injury was done, though I had received a severe wound in a most unsatisfactory manner, the effects of which were felt for a long time.

When lounging about in the morning in the vicinity of our quarters, the costume of many of us, in those barbarous times, was very light and airy, consisting simply of a shirt and a pair of long drawers (loose trousers fastened round the waist with a string, and used in India for sleeping), a large straw hat covering the head, whilst the feet were frequently quite independent of shoes and stockings. Thus lightly attired, with a cigar in his mouth, would many a sub. be seen roving about, spear in hand, in search of the species of game I have before described, and this freedom from restraint as to dress could be indulged in without doing violence to the delicate scruples of the softer sex, not a single European female having accompanied the expedition to Ava. Indeed, they are never permitted to accompany their husbands into the field in India; and very properly, for a long train of wives and children of course would prove a very serious clog upon active operations before an enemy. How the custom can be tolerated at all seems

strange, as it is allowed to a limited extent when our troops take the field in Europe. There ought, however, to be a good reason for such an indulgence, and probably there is.

The first of the population that returned to Rangoon after its capture were the poonghis, or priests, who imperceptibly dropped in, one by one, and quietly resumed their occupations, shewing a confidence in us which was very gratifying. What motive really instigated them it is difficult to say, but probably they relied upon the sanctity of their profession as a guarantee against violence. In my eyes they contrasted strongly and most favourably with the bigotted and haughty priesthood of Brahma, who almost think themselves polluted when breathing the same atmosphere with a Christian. The priests of Buddha, on the contrary, were ever glad to hold intercourse with us, and give us ready access to the interior of their houses; indeed, their mild manners and humble demeanour, so truly in keeping with their profession, were no slight evidences of the superiority of the doctrines they advocated over those of the Brahminical code.

Many fraternities of the priesthood resided close to my quarters, and I constantly looked in upon them during my rambles. There was one

family of poonghis in particular, within a few yards of my door, with whom I struck up a sort of friendship, if such was possible where the intercourse was mainly by dumb show, for at this period I was no great proficient in the Burman tongue, my knowledge of the language being limited to a few words which circumstances rendered more immediately necessary. To this house I had ever free access, and scarcely a day passed without paying my accustomed visit. Here it was for the first time I discovered Burmese playing at the veritable game of chess—a symptom of intellectual refinement I was by no means prepared for in such an obscure and barbarous corner of the globe. The apparatus, to be sure, was somewhat uncouth, the men being roughly carved out of wood; but there were the regular pieces, and they were played in the ordinary manner. The peculiarities I noticed were, that they called the knight *the horse*, and played with very great rapidity; indeed, they moved the pieces more quickly than we do at a game of draughts.

In the dwellings of the priests were generally to be seen an abundance of idol images, of all sorts and sizes, representing Gaudma in the favourite posture, sitting cross-legged, with one hand resting on his lap, whilst the other hung

by his side. These images were for the most part of alabaster, and partially gilded, that process being in high repute amongst the Burmese for all religious and royal purposes. Some of these alabaster images were of a very large size, and many that were rescued from the general wreck that followed our occupation of Rangoon were despatched to India and England, where I have often since had the pleasure of meeting some of my old acquaintances. One or two of these occupy a conspicuous and honourable position in the entrance-room of the British Museum.

There was, however, another description of images, which were very numerous, but only limited to certain localities; these were small, and varied a little in size, and were formed of chunam, with a thin covering of silver, and occasionally of gold: on an average, they might have contained four or five shillings' worth of silver, or gold in proportion. They were found in little cells or chambers, ingeniously contrived, and built up—consequently quite concealed from view; and every one of the numberless pagodas of Ava contains several of these little glittering tenants. The existence of the chambers that contained the images was discovered merely by accident, and in the following manner: A cocoa-nut tree had been

felled by some of our lads for the sake of its fruit, such being the shortest and simplest mode of getting at it, and the tree in its fall coming in contact with the top of a pagoda, knocked it off, and thereby laid open some of its hidden treasure, so at least it was currently reported at the time. This source of wealth had not of course been long discovered before every pagoda within reach was perforated, and its *penates* extracted, through the activity of our soldiery, who proved themselves, in such instances, no mean adepts in the art of sapping and mining. Thus did we desecrate their temples, not, indeed, from an excess of religious zeal—for truly there was little enough of that amongst us—but under the powerful influence of the “*auri sacra fames*,” or, in the absence of that, pure wantonness—a mode of proceeding, it will be thought, not very well adapted to win the favour of the Burmans, or to draw back the terrified population to their deserted dwellings.

The pagodas in Burmah, though varying considerably in size and decoration, were all built nearly upon the same model, from Shoe Dagon downwards. At the base their shape is octagonal; a little distance above they assume the form of a dome, from which they gradually and no less gracefully taper to a point not altogether dissimi-

lar to a Moorish minaret. They were all formed of solid brickwork, and covered over with a thick coating of fine plaster, known in India by the name of *chunam*. Many were gilded, but this mode of decoration was too costly to be general. The Shoe Dagon, however, nearly 400 feet in height, is superbly gilt all over, and has a most gorgeous appearance. As it is, the great extent to which gilding is carried throughout Ava, in which art the inhabitants seem peculiarly skilled, must cause an immense annual consumption of the precious metal. Its employment was by no means limited to the external beautifying of their temples, for it entered largely into the decoration of other religious edifices, as well as of books, images, and other articles.

Another point of considerable interest in these pagodas was found in the *tee* ('umbrella,' in Burmese), which surmounts each. This ornament was elegantly constructed of open ironwork, gilded over, from which hung a profusion of small bells; and these being set in motion by the lightest breeze, produced a most pleasing and even musical sound, and many a time, when kept awake by my duties on picket or otherwise, have I listened at midnight with indescribable satisfaction to this harmonious tink-

ling, whilst stretched upon the ground wrapped in my cloak, or pacing to and fro before the watch-fire. Though not "those village bells," the chime of which is so dear to the ear and the heart of every Englishman, yet still there was something soothing in this music that touched one's finer, better feelings, and carried our thoughts back to the distant land of our fathers, and the "Home, sweet home," of our boyhood.

CHAP. VIII.

EXPEDITION TO PEGUE.

Towards the latter end of November, 1824, the heavy and incessant rains consequent upon the south-west monsoon, that for six months had deluged the vast plains of Pegue, were exhausted; the monsoon had, like a child, "cried itself to rest," and Nature was beginning once more to hold up her head, and to dry herself after a somewhat lengthened shower-bath. This delightful re-action, if it may be so termed, was as acceptable to the animal as to the vegetable kingdom; and in proportion as the moisture was evaporated in which we had well-nigh being all swamped, so once more did our hitherto crowded hospitals restore to us many a gallant patient that the cheering atmospherical change had rescued from

disease and death. There was, indeed, a general revival, and we now began to gird up our loins, and prepare for a more extended field of operations, not doubting that the breaking up of the monsoon would be the signal for the breaking up of the force for a forward movement upon the capital. In numbers, however, as well as in health, the army was sadly crippled; for up to the end of October, six months after our arrival in the country, we had buried from disease and the sword no fewer than twelve hundred European soldiers! and though death had not, perhaps, been so busy amongst our native troops, their hospitals were generally even more crowded than those of their European comrades. Our sepoys suffered much from the most frightful ulcers, often rendering necessary the amputation of a leg or an arm; these were the effects, principally, of leech-bites, the wet herbage and water, through which the natives had frequently to wade, harbouring thousands of these animals, when of course they would readily adhere to the naked limb, and the blood, from bad diet, was then in such an unhealthy state, that upon the leech being hastily removed, the wound, however trivial, was almost certain to fester, and terminate in an ulcer. In my shooting excursions, when

wading through water in pursuit of wild fowl, I have at times found a large horse-leech adhering to me, to remedy which inconvenience I used to carry occasionally a little salt in my waistcoat pocket.

About the period in question many vague rumours reached the camp of the approach of a Burman army, under the celebrated Bundoolah, who had given us such a licking at Ramoo ; but they as rapidly died away. That some desperate effort to get rid of us would be made, we hardly doubted ; but our sources of information were so scanty, and so little to be relied upon, that no idea could be formed as to when and where the blow was to be struck. Indeed, we had been so long and so often deceived, harassed by false reports by day, and false alarms by night, that the prospect of grappling fairly in the field with a Burman army appeared to most of us as still very distant, if not altogether visionary. Nevertheless, no pains were wanting on our part to prepare for such a contingency, by strengthening our position. This was effected by felling trees, clearing away the jungle so as to open a free communication between the different points, and by erecting batteries for guns and mortars, on the most eligible spots. These operations were not

carried out without great labour, we being still mainly dependent on our own resources.

Whilst matters were in this position, one day our immediate advance being talked of, and on another the enemy's approach being as confidently affirmed, on the 25th of November 300 men of the 1st Madras European Regiment, and the same number of sepoy from the 28th M.N.I., with two 6-pounders and a howitzer, the whole under the command of Brigadier Mallet, of H.M.'s 89th regt., were ordered to hold themselves in readiness for embarkation in boats on the following morning, with fourteen days' provisions. Captain Chads, R.N., was entrusted with the naval direction of the expedition, which we soon found was destined for Pegue, the ancient capital of the province of that name, and which was said to have been strongly stockaded by the enemy. The probability of an excursion in this direction had long been calculated upon with pleasure, and we were now soon to find ourselves *en route* for this celebrated place, which, though fallen from its high estate, as we well knew, we still hoped would not be altogether unproductive in the very essential matter of prize-money—a point in all operations never lost sight of by soldiers on service.

The old capital of Pegue is situated on the left bank of the river of the same name, at the distance of probably eighty miles from Rangoon, in a north-easterly direction. Symes calculated the distance at ninety miles, and so it might be, so numerous are the windings of the river; but in a straight line the two places are not probably more than sixty miles apart. Less than a century ago, Pegue, or *Bagoo*, as the natives pronounce it, flourished in great grandeur as the capital of an extensive and powerful kingdom; indeed, in the year 1752, after repeated struggles for the mastery between the two nations, the warlike Burmans were conquered by it, their capital, Ava, having fallen, and their king, Dweepdee, the last of a long line of Burman monarchs, being led away into captivity. The successes of the Peguers, however, were mainly owing to the assistance they received from European traders, who supplied them with fire-arms, and in other respects materially aided their cause. This must have been a proud period for Pegue, when she thus lorded it over the haughty Burman; but her triumph was only of short duration. Her king, Beinga Della, had not long rested upon his laurels, and had no sooner issued his general proclamation, couched in terms of the

most insolent triumph, to the effect that Burmah was annexed, as a conquered province, to the Pegue monarchy, and Pegue in future was to be the capital of the empire—thus throwing Ava completely into the shade—when up started that extraordinary man, Alompra, a sort of Indo-Chinese Napoleon, and turned the tables upon them most completely.

This man was of low extraction, moving in a humble sphere; but the spirit of patriotism or ambition, probably a compound of both, burned strong within him, and he had the audacity to plan, and the ability to carry out, a scheme, if such it could be called, for the deliverance of his country from the odious yoke to which it was subjected. His means were most insignificant, for when he broke out into open rebellion he had only one hundred followers; indeed, this act of Alompra's is, without doubt, one of the most desperate and daring on record. However, after a series of brilliant successes, the effects of his extraordinary courage and capacity, Alompra not only freed his country from a foreign yoke, and raised himself to the sovereign power, but, in the year 1757, he besieged and captured the city of Pegue itself, which was immediately given up to indiscriminate plunder. History further tells us that

the inhabitants were all either dispersed or led into captivity, and that every dwelling was razed to the ground. From that period to the present day Pegue has never recovered its independence, but has formed an integral part of the Burman empire. The city of Pegue remained a heap of ruins until the year 1790, about which time the reigning king of Ava, in a spirit of enlightened policy, and with a view to conciliate the Peguers to his rule, issued orders to rebuild the city, and gave every encouragement to settlers and descendants of former inhabitants to facilitate his object. This modern edition of Pegue, therefore, was the point for which our little expedition was bound, and though we did not anticipate much splendour, we fully expected to find a respectable-looking town.

It was on the afternoon of the 26th that our detachment embarked, when, after passing Monkey Point (so called from its being a favourite resort of the mimic tribe, which would here fearlessly come down to the waterside to solicit contributions from each boat that glided by), we dropped down, when the ebb tide was nearly spent, to the point of junction between the Rangoon and Pegue rivers, about three miles below the town, and here we anchored till the first of

flood tide would enable us to ascend the latter river. Upon this occasion I was in a flat-bottomed boat, the centre of which was thatched over, and this was allotted to the men, whilst the officers, four in number, occupied the head of the boat, the only part of it that was decked. We were a large party, mustering, crew and all, seventy-five hands—a pretty good freight for an open boat! Nothing, indeed, could well exceed the discomfort and wretchedness we experienced the first night; the men slept literally piled one upon the other, like bales of cotton, and the officers took a nap turn and turn about, there not being sufficient space for us all to lie down at the same time. It was night when the flotilla, escorted by several men-of-war's boats, anchored at the point referred to, waiting the turn of the tide, which was still running down; and here, I well remember, our boat for a short time was in an awkward dilemma, for we had no sooner dropped our anchor, than we continued to drift down with the stream as fast as ever, and before we could bring the boat up we had fallen considerably astern of the flotilla, and from our vicinity to the bank, which was in the occupation of the enemy, as well as from our isolated position, we certainly began to feel somewhat nervous. At length, to

our great relief, we got the anchor to hold, when we retired to rest without apprehension. The fact is, we were only furnished with the common *wooden* anchor used by the natives, which, having but one fluke, of course only held when this happened to sink in the proper position. Some may be startled at the mention of a *wooden* anchor, but travellers see strange sights, and this kind of article is commonly seen to the eastward. The material is, of course, very fine-grained, and consequently heavy; I believe it is called iron-wood. Our anchor, in short, was simply a huge wooden hook—a very unsuitable protection for a boat containing, as ours did, seventy-five people.

As soon as the tide served, we proceeded, passing the old fort of Syriam to our right, whence a few shots were fired at us, thus proving that the post was again in the occupation of the enemy. Though shrouded in darkness, the flotilla kept well together, and held its upward course under the influence of the tide, aided by oar or paddle (for we numbered many native canoes amongst us), and though we passed a most comfortless night, the bright morning sun shone cheerily upon the scene, and found us rapidly progressing on our way. A flotilla of nearly fifty boats, freighted with red-coats, was a gay and gallant

sight when lit up with the rays of a glorious tropical sun ; and as we made our simple toilet, going through the process of combing, brushing, and washing in public, at the head of the vessel, we could occasionally exchange greetings with friends in the neighbouring boats. The dews, at the period referred to, in Burmah, are remarkably heavy, saturating everything with moisture during the night, and answering the purpose of heavy rain : such dews, perhaps, are unknown anywhere else. To these I was now exposed all night, in common, of course, with others, and to a scorching sun all day—being, in fact, without shelter of any kind during the week we were on the expedition. At that time I slept in a woollen nightcap, which was so wet in the morning that I regularly wrung the water out of it ! Such exposure, it may be well supposed, was very detrimental to the health of all concerned ; and if there was any possibility of tracing one's ailments to their source, I have little doubt that the seeds of disease, and perhaps death, were sown in many a manly frame during this destructive exposure on the Pegue river. Our diet, too, was quite in keeping with everything else, for during this excursion my party had literally nothing to eat but a half-boiled ham and rice ; and this was our

fare for breakfast, dinner and supper, unaided even by a morsel of biscuit! Now ham is a capital thing to give a zest to other food, but when one is driven to feed upon it three times a day the surfeited stomach turns from it almost with disgust, whilst the incessant thirst such food creates greatly aggravates the evil. At that time we made our tea (for there is no getting on without it) by boiling it in a saucepan, that being the only convenience we then had for preparing the infusion. This we drank *à la Chinoise*, without milk or sugar, and out of pewter mugs; for, be it known, we were most of us provided with this article, which was made generally useful. Thus, for example, it would begin the day at the toilet, in the process of teeth-cleaning; that duty performed, it would be transferred to the breakfast-table (whenever there happened to be one), where it did the duty of a tea or coffee-cup; the mug would then be available for dinner, as a receptacle either for a pint of Hodgson's ale, or, in the absence of this luxury, brandy and water; in short, these mugs were our constant and most useful companions.

I have said, there was no getting on without tea; and, in truth, not only during service in the field, but at all times and under all circumstances,

in India, "the cup that cheers, but not inebriates," is in constant requisition. Whether it greeted us in garrison, with the first streak of dawn, as we arose languid and unrefreshed from our feverish couch, or whether we found it waiting our arrival after a hot and dusty morning march, beneath a scorching sun, the cup of tea was equally grateful; whilst we seldom failed to wind up the day with it. I could ever truly say, employing the well-known pun,

Te (tea) veniente die, te (tea) decedente canebam.

Nothing, moreover, is more refreshing than cold tea, and in India people frequently avail themselves of it on the line of march, or on shooting excursions. It should be added, that this favorite beverage is far superior in the East to the wishy-washy stuff that is too often dignified with the name of tea in England, and which owes most of its flavour to the sugar and cream. The difference is attributable, I conclude, to the superior freshness of the article in India, which comes to us direct and speedily from China, and is drunk forthwith, whilst in England it often remains in the warehouse for years before it finds its way to the retail dealer, which must of course detract from its flavour.

On the morning after leaving Rangoon, the

rising sun found us merrily proceeding on our watery way. The river was still of considerable breadth, and the country on either side, though flat, was covered with verdure, and had many features of interest, whilst, far to the right, the blue distance was bounded by the lofty peaks of the Martaban range. The population in these parts is very scanty, and habitations were consequently seldom visible ; we were therefore agreeably surprised when, on rounding a point somewhat suddenly, we found ourselves close to the town of Dezat, if such a term can be properly applied to a collection of bamboo tenements. There was evidently great consternation as soon as we hove in sight, and we could discern the terrified villagers hurrying away into the interior, whilst others pushed off in their canoes and paddled up the stream ; but our sole aim being to obtain information relative to Pegue, the object of the expedition, we left them unmolested and passed on. The scene was, nevertheless, animating and interesting, and full of novelty, after having been so long cramped up within our lines at Rangoon.

After passing Dezat the breadth of the river contracted considerably, and the country, which hitherto was tolerably open, and partially culti-

vated, became once more an impervious wilderness of gigantic reed grass, frequently lofty enough to shelter an elephant, and low tangled jungle, which reached to the water's edge, and overhung the steep and slimy banks, affording a grateful shade to the numerous alligators that infest these parts, and which, at low water, we could often descry stretched out upon the mud, like huge logs of wood or trunks of trees, whilst sometimes we saw them swimming in the river. They are monstrous brutes, often exceeding 20 feet in length. Somewhere about here my boat fell in with the carcase of a royal tiger, which, upon examination, we found had lost one or two of his paws; they had probably been cut off to secure the prize usually given in Eastern counties for the destruction of these pests of the animal kingdom.

In the course of this day we reached the small village of Obo, on the eastern bank of the river, where we anchored. The inhabitants, as usual, fled at our approach, excepting one unfortunate fellow whom we found crouching behind a clump of bamboo, literally paralyzed with fear. It was altogether a very uninteresting spot, and so enveloped in high grass and jungle that there was no possibility of catching a glimpse of the coun-

try in the interior. There being nobody to sell to us, we were necessitated to help ourselves to such scanty supplies as the place afforded, such as poultry, plantains and paddy, the principal productions of a Burman farm.

On the morrow our course was tedious, the tide having nearly lost its power, and the windings of the river being incessant, whilst it had narrowed to the breadth of a mere English stream. As we drew near our destination the country became more open, stretching away in extensive plains as far as the eye could reach, where herds of buffaloes were grazing. Symptoms of bygone prosperity would also at intervals be discernible in dilapidated pagodas, and traces of former cultivations—pots, probably, in the palmy days of Pegue,

Where many a garden smiled,

And still where many a garden flower grew wild.

The celebrated temple of Shoemadoo, higher by thirty feet than the Shoedagon, had long been conspicuous in the distance, towering above all; and a noble feature it was, an emblem of stately and solitary grandeur, in the midst of an apparent wilderness of vegetation, for as yet no habitations were visible. With each bend of the river, however, we now suddenly came upon dwellings apparently deserted, though under cover

of some of these a few shots were fired at us as we passed. A little further in advance, and the flotilla drew up under the left bank, opposite a mean and straggling line of houses, the poverty-stricken appearance of which woefully disappointed our expectations: but we hugged ourselves with the idea that Shoemadoo, in the distance, still held out to us the prospect of a golden harvest.

I never shall forget the extraordinary celerity with which, upon this occasion, our little force of 600 bayonets and three pieces of cannon were landed and formed up in column, all ready for action; it was like magic, and was a striking proof of the admirable zeal that actuated all ranks when an enemy was to be encountered, a very few minutes having sufficed for the operation. What surprised us most was, the expedition with which the cumbersome artillery was landed. Parallel with the column of regulars, Mr. L., ever zealous, had drawn up his row-boat wallahs as an auxiliary corps; they were armed with all kind of weapons, and were truly a "motley crew." Though we were thus prepared for any ordinary contingency, no enemy was visible, and the town or village that skirted the banks of the river was quite deserted. The

great pagoda appeared to be rather more than a mile distant to our right, and though a lofty bamboo hedge effectually shut out every thing but this from our view, we still expected to find a flourishing town, and perhaps a stockade or two, at its base.

A reconnoitering party, consisting of the grenadiers of the European regiment to which I belonged, was now pushed on in the direction of the pagoda, accompanied by the brigadier and staff. Having advanced a short distance, in the direction of the aforesaid hedge, we found ourselves on a causeway, crossing a sheet of water, of uniform breadth, probably seventy or eighty yards, which we soon discovered to be a moat, from the lofty remains of an old brick wall, now covered with rubbish and brushwood, which ran in a straight line far to the right and left, being the ruins of the strong and extensive fortress of ancient Pegue, so celebrated in Eastern story. On passing through what had once been a gateway, we were astonished at the height and solidity of the wall on each side, the product of almost incredible labour. The space in the interior was flat, and partially cultivated, though formerly it was densely covered with human habitations; "*Hic seges est, ubi Troja fuit.*" For the

most part, however, the vast area, a mile and a half square, was a wilderness; and many parts, especially the ditch, afforded good snipe and wild-fowl shooting, as I subsequently ascertained. The Shoemadoo pagoda was situated in the north-east angle of this enclosure, and round its base we discerned a large and mean-looking village, whilst here and there the comfortable and elevated dwelling of a Poonghi would peep out amidst a clump of shady trees. At this point we soon arrived, and were again doomed to be disappointed, for every dwelling was deserted, there being no symptoms of life, excepting the poultry and pariah dogs, who had the place all to themselves. There was, however, an aged man, chained to the spot by his infirmities, and from him we learned that a boat had arrived from Rangoon two days previously to inform the enemy of our approach, when, not being in a condition to oppose us with any prospect of success, the troops had decamped, driving the population before them, according to custom. Here, therefore, was an end to all our dreams of glory and prize-money!

Though every house was deserted, no irregularities were permitted, so as to prove to the harmless inhabitants that we were not war-

ring against them, but only with the government that tyrannized over them. A thoughtless fellow in our grenadiers, as we marched through, spitted a fine young cock with his bayonet, and then, throwing his musket over his shoulder as before, cruelly left the poor bird fluttering at the end of it, to the no small merriment of his comrades. The heartless act, however, catching the eye of the brigadier, he was instantly put in arrest, and threatened with the heaviest punishment. I believe this to have been the only instance of irregularity during the expedition, which must be considered as highly creditable to such an ill-conditioned hungry soldiery as ours was.

We ascended the flight of steps leading to the great pagoda, but still all was silent and deserted as the city of the dead, though on every side the recent traces of a busy population that had been unseasonably disturbed in their ordinary occupation met our eye. The effect of this was, or rather *should have been*, melancholy, for the reflecting Englishman, at such a scene, would surely revert with gratitude to the freedom from all the horrors and inconveniences of war that is enjoyed by his own highly-favoured land. There was much to interest us in the pagoda and

its appendages, and upon ascending some little way up it, which its formation enabled us to do easily, we were gratified by an extensive and picturesque view of the surrounding country, through which, to the southward, the Pegue river was seen winding its way, like a silver eel. The general face of the country differed much in character from that about Rangoon, which was nearly enveloped in jungle. Here we looked down upon a level and luxuriant country, tolerably open on all sides, interspersed with tracts of brushwood and clumps of trees, in the midst of which, every here and there, would be seen the gilded and graceful spire of a pagoda.

Shoemadoo, though now, from the deserted and impoverished state of Pegue, shabby and neglected, was once, in point of sanctity, superior to all other temples in Ava, and the natives declare it to be more than two thousand years old: their records, or rather traditions, are, however, little to be depended upon. It was formerly gilded as highly as the Shoedagon pagoda, to which, in point of size and elegance of structure, it is superior; but exposure to the weather and long neglect had obliterated all traces of the gilding, and at the period of our visit its colour was almost black. Though all around it spoke of

decay, the monstrous temple itself, solid as one of the pyramids, was still untouched by the corroding tooth of time, and, whilst every thing was on a very reduced scale, there was still a moderate establishment of priests, &c., for conducting the religious observances appertaining to the building. In after days, when my corps was stationed at this place, I enjoyed many a game of football and cricket on the platform of this pagoda, and many a time and oft have I mounted guard there, and been lulled to sleep by the tinkling of the little bells on its summit.

During our short sojourn on this occasion, we had only an opportunity of taking a very rapid survey of this most interesting spot, and the ruinous traces of its former grandeur as seen in the decayed walls of the old fort. This was a square, or nearly so, each face measuring about a mile and half in length, flanked by equidistant square bastions, (but few traces of which now remain,) and containing either two or three gateways, I forget which. Symes computed the walls to have been originally thirty feet high, and forty at the base. On the whole, especially as respects its great extent and the extraordinary labour expended upon it, evidently directed, one would say, by some half-educated Euro-

pean engineer of the age, the Pegue fort is a very surprising work ; but whilst it is a monument of the skill and perseverance of man, it is no less so of the vanity and insufficiency of all earthly grandeur.

On the day succeeding our arrival I went out with my gun, and fell in with some jungle fowl and snipes. The best point for the latter was the old fort ditch, which, being for the most part filled up from the *débris* of the walls, was very shallow, and formed, during the wet season, quite a swamp, consequently a favourite resort for the latter game. In the course of our rambles on the day following our arrival some of us paid a visit to a most attractive spot in the vicinity of the pagoda. It was the site of a Poonghi's dwelling, and a delightfully cool and comfortable retreat it was, being effectually screened from the sun by lofty and umbrageous jack and mangoe trees. Like every other spot, it had evidence of being only recently deserted ; but the abundant supply of books scattered about proved it to be the abode of study and meditation, for which, by its seclusion and repose, it appeared admirably adapted. To have disturbed any thing here would have been a species of sacrilege, so we retired, after drinking the health of the learned

and absent owner in a draught of the sweetest, purest, and coolest water (as we then thought) we had ever tasted! The water stood, according to custom, in the outer room, a sort of covered verandah, in the large earthen jars of Pegue, and we drank it out of a ladle formed of half a cocoa-nut shell with a handle; one of these implements being ever ready at hand, over the mouth of the jar.

On the day after our arrival (the 30th November,) there being nothing to detain us longer, we re-embarked, and got under weigh again for Rangoon, having left the British colours flying on an elevated point near the pagoda, and a white flag (in reality, I believe, a table-cloth) at the landing-place—the former was the emblem of conquest, and the latter of conciliation—the one breathed defiance to the hostile Burmans, and the other offered peace and protection to the well-disposed natives of Pegue. In descending the river, which we did rapidly, the cholera broke out amongst us; but we were not long enough *en route* for it to commit much havoc. We anchored on the evening of the following day nearly opposite Dezat, and about thirty miles from Rangoon. I have still a very vivid recollection of this afternoon, for there was much to

impress it upon my memory. The weather was delightful, the atmosphere being cool and placid, and as we glided down the stream without an effort of our own, the band struck up and enlivened us with some of the favourite regimental airs. Military music, however, does not flourish in India, though bands, of course, there are in abundance: the reason is, the difficulty of finding performers to fill up vacancies, for the natives are, naturally enough, slow in adapting their ear to European strains, and moreover they seem not to possess that strength of lungs necessary for filling our wind instruments. Nevertheless, at the cost of much labour and expense on the part of the officers, some few of our native corps have excellent bands. Even the royal regiments, with all their advantages for having good music, soon fall off in this respect after their arrival in India, where the fine band, fresh from Europe, is speedily thinned by fever or dysentery, when the vacancies thus occasioned are but imperfectly filled up by such chance performers as the regiment ranks may supply. The band of "The Lambs" had been very strong and very noisy; but sickness had now sadly thinned its ranks, and, from being entirely dependent upon the corps for musicians, our strains never attained to any great

degree of celebrity. The favourite airs were "*The British Grenadiers*," "*Blue Bonnets over the Border*," "*Over the Hills and far awa*," and others of this stamp, mostly set to a quick step, together with the favourite marches of the several royal regiments that from time to time had served in India. This description of music, consisting mostly of martial airs, and well adapted for the field, satisfied us as long as they were played with a full proportion of big drum and trumpet, such with many, and probably most of us, being the true criterion. But to return to the flotilla which we left at anchor thirty miles from Rangoon.

We got under way, for the last time, very early on the following morning, being the 2nd December, and dropped rapidly down with the tide. It was just daybreak, but we were all awake, and busily employed in dressing and brushing up a little, previous to landing. After a time our attention was aroused by repeated sounds, resembling the report of cannon, in the direction of Rangoon. When the reports were no longer doubtful, for we were rapidly lessening the distance between us and the point whence they proceeded, many had settled it to their satisfaction that our artillery had a field-day, and were out

practising. Some there were amongst us, however, who had not forgotten the rumours of an approaching attack by the redoubtable Bundoolah, that had so long prevailed; and we now (for I was one of the number) felt assured that, in the distant cannonade, we had a clear proof that the wolf had arrived at last. The point, however, would soon be settled, and we were all, of course, full of anxiety.

In due time we began to near Rangoon, which was still effectually concealed from us by the sudden bend of the Pegue river, previous to its junction with the larger stream; and now,

— Nearer, clearer, deadlier than before,

the heavy and constant report of cannon fell upon our ears, amidst which we could at intervals distinguish the rattling of musketry. But what now proved to us beyond a doubt that our position was attacked was, the bursting of shells in the air in the direction of the great pagoda, of which we could catch an occasional glimpse far to the right. Now, the flotilla having doubled the point, and entered the main stream, an extensive and most interesting view opened upon us.

The town of Rangoon stretched along the river's bank far as the eye could reach, and in the distance, about two miles and a half inland,

Shoedagon shot up its gilded spire into the clear blue sky, from amidst a sea of verdure. At this point, and the broken ground in its vicinity, the light clouds of smoke that followed each discharge of cannon or musketry were seen slowly ascending into the air. Opposite the town, a large fleet of men-of-war and transports was still at anchor; but it was instantly evident to us that the latter were moored closer to the town than usual, the cause of which was as immediately discernible in the repeated discharges of cannon we now witnessed from the Dalla side of the river, and which, of course, proved its being in the occupation of the enemy. Here we were then, at last, fairly in for it, and "*Bella, horrida bella,*" was once more the order of the day.

Full of excitement and anxiety as to the state of affairs, we soon pulled up at the King's Wharf, where we found Capt. H., the deputy adjutant-general of the Madras division, waiting to receive us. We were ordered to land forthwith, and we learned from him, in a few words, that our position had been completely invested by the enemy since the morning of the day previous, the 1st December; that we had been obliged to evacuate Dalla, that our pickets were driven in, and that the important outpost of

Kimmendine, a short way up the river, was also closely besieged by a large force of the enemy. On the other hand, it appeared we had made two dashing and most successful sorties upon their entrenchments in front of the pagoda, causing them a loss of 600 or 700 killed, whilst ours was comparatively trifling; nevertheless, many lives had been lost, and amongst them I was grieved to hear the names of two officers with whom I had been acquainted, Capt. O'Shea, of the 13th L.I., and Lieut. O'Brien, of the 28th M.N.I. The 13th, moreover, had five other officers wounded on the occasion. One of the sorties mentioned had taken place on the morning of our arrival, and it was the firing consequent upon it that had so roused our attention.

At such an important juncture, when there was so much work on hand, of course the arrival of our Pegue detachments had been anxiously expected, and we had no sooner formed up on *terra firma* than my corps was marched off to a post assigned it in the centre of the Bengal lines, being the right of our position, and commanding a tolerably good, though distant, view of the enemy's operations. Nothing, however, could have been more comfortless than our situation here, there being but two houses to shelter us all, officers

and men, and we were hurried away to this point through the comfortable-looking lines previously allotted to the corps, and still containing our heavy baggage, and tenanted by the sick and wounded, without being even permitted to replenish our knapsacks or to get a decent meal, after having been roughing it for a week in open boats. I remember, however, that some of us, by a hasty sortie from the ranks, as we marched through, made a dash at the breakfast-table of a brother officer, on the sick list, who, during our absence, had been luxuriating in the comforts of garrison, when a most refreshing cup of tea and a most delicious piece of bread fell to my share. This luxury had just then been introduced into Rangoon, through the agency of some enterprising Chinese, if I remember rightly, to whom, by the way, we were indebted for many of the supplies and comforts that latterly flowed in upon us so abundantly. Some thousands of Chinese were, *after a time*, located in the town, having come mostly from Penang. These brought over with them, in their junks, pigs, poultry, vegetables and tea and sugar, in abundance. The pork-butchers, in particular, carried on a most flourishing trade, there being ever a great demand for pork chops and sausages; and many of these

gentry, doubtless, amassed considerable sums, as they well deserved, by their industry and enterprise, in the exercise of which attributes, as far at least as relates to commerce, the Chinese have no superiors.

Our regiment soon reached the post assigned to it in the Bengal lines, and here for the present we will leave them, deferring to another opportunity any further details of this by far most interesting period of the war.

CHAP IX.

INVESTMENT OF RANGOON BY THE ENEMY.

By far the most interesting and exciting period of the war in Ava was in December, 1824, when the celebrated Bundoolah, with an army of sixty or seventy thousand men, elated by their successes on the north-western frontier, and emboldened by our apparent helplessness and inactivity during the eight months we had occupied Rangoon, set themselves down before our position, with the full determination of driving us into the sea. To be thus besieged in our cantonments was then quite a novel feature in Anglo-Indian warfare; but though the enemy was so formidable as to numbers, and one-half of our small force was non-effective from sickness, from past experience we derived a hope of a happy issue; and supposing even the enemy to succeed in

forcing our position by a *coup de main*, we had still the shipping to fall back upon, the river being open to us.

For the better understanding the matter before us, it seems necessary here to repeat, that the position of the British army approached in form that of an isosceles triangle, the town being the base, and the Shoedagon the apex, or salient angle, both points being well garrisoned and protected by cannon; whilst the main body of the troops occupied the ground forming the two sides, batteries being erected on several eligible spots in the intervals. The whole extent of our position was not less than six miles, and our means of defence inland did not exceed 5,000 men and sixty pieces of cannon, somewhere about the same number of troops being still in hospital. The enemy had 70,000 men, one-half said to be musketeers, aided by a very numerous, if not very efficient, train of artillery. Of cavalry they mustered but few, that arm consisting merely of some few hundred Cassay horse; so, indeed, they are called, but the truth is there are no horses in the country, the animal employed being the ordinary Pegue pony, which, however, is very strong and equal to any fatigue.

For many months rumour had been busy as

to the mighty preparations in progress for our speedy expulsion from his golden-footed majesty's dominions ; but we had been so often deceived by false alarms, that it was with no little astonishment we found ourselves on the 1st December completely hemmed in on every side by 70,000 barbarians! The enemy commenced operations by driving in our pickets, and by taking possession of the village of Pussendine, on our extreme right, and the town of Maindhu, opposite Rangoon. The important outpost of Kimmendine was also closely invested by a body of 6,000 or 7,000 men, and though protected on the river face by one or two small men-of-war, the weakness of its works and the smallness of its garrison, could not but occasion us all considerable uneasiness, however encouraged we might have been by the well-known character of the troops, consisting of the 26th M.N.I., and a detachment of the Madras European Regiment and Madras artillery.

When the Burmese took up their position they commenced forthwith entrenching themselves, after their peculiar manner, in which operation they certainly displayed great expedition and very considerable skill. In this respect every Burman soldier is a pioneer, or sapper and miner,

for, in an inconceivably short period, of the vast living cordon that encircled us, there was at times little or no trace, save in their light swallow-tailed banners, as they fluttered in the breeze, that marked the line of circumvallation, or in the gilded chattahs, or umbrellas, glittering in the sun's rays, that denoted the progress of a chief through the trenches. The course of the latter was apparent enough in the piles of newly up-raised earth, and we were astonished in the morning at the extraordinary progress made during the hours of darkness. The indefatigable zeal displayed upon this occasion was as striking a proof as could be afforded of their own thorough self-sufficiency, and of their utter ignorance of the power they were opposing. Thus did our dusky foemen bury themselves in the earth like moles, on each successive day bringing their approaches considerably nearer our lines. The trenches alluded to are so hollowed out as to afford the most effectual shelter from musketry, and even from the explosion of a shell. Each man digs a hole, in which he conceals himself; these holes are connected together by one common trench, which is advanced by zig-zag approaches towards the point of attack, whilst an abattis, or row of sharp bamboo spikes, is fre-

quently thrown up in front, to repel any sudden attack.

In the sketch preceding this it has been shewn how two successful sorties had been made upon the enemy's entrenchments, on the 1st and 2nd December, causing them severe loss, and costing us some valuable lives. These were, however, but partial affairs, having been engaged in mainly to ascertain the strength and distribution of the forces opposed to us, for the object of our chief was, by a show of moderation and forbearance, to draw on a general engagement, a very probable result from the confidence and over-weening vanity of the Burman character. Every effort, therefore, was made by us to induce them to develop their plans and to bring forward their resources, which would enable us, when the hour of trial arrived, to attack them with advantage, for our numbers were far too weak to justify the frittering away of our means in trivial encounters,

Such was the state of affairs when the expedition returned from Pegue on the morning of the 2nd December, and my corps took up the station assigned it on the right of our position. Here we remained in a comparative state of inactivity for three days, wondering what the general could be about, and expressing the greatest eagerness to

be led against the enemy, who, attributing our passive conduct to fear, began to get very saucy, and were running up their entrenchments to within a fearfully short distance of our lines. It must not be inferred, however, that our troops were idle during the period referred to; on the contrary, we had to be on the alert night and day, and though we desired to avoid a general action, the pickets were necessarily often engaged, and "every day and all day long" our artillery were blazing away at the enemy with shot and shell, whenever an object showed itself. In the direction of Kimmendine the firing was incessant, especially at night, and, having had no communication with that post for the first two or three days of the siege, their being so closely pressed could not but cause us great anxiety. On the first of December an attempt was made by a party of H.M. 41st regt. and some native infantry, under Major Clemons, to force the road leading to Kimmendine from the Great Pagoda; but the enemy's strength rendered it impracticable, and the detachment was obliged to retreat with loss.

During the time our regiment occupied the post referred to, we led a very scrambling uncomfortable sort of life. The ground, however, being elevated, we commanded a tolerable view of the

entrenchments of our opponents, and the whole day was passed in watching their slightest movements through a telescope. The occasional bursting of a shell, or the course of a round shot from our batteries, as it ploughed up the dust in the enemy's lines, was ever an object of the highest interest. The ground along this face of our position was in many parts broken and rugged, and interspersed with clumps of trees and patches of brushwood. There was, however, much open ground, which would admit of troops being formed up with great facility. The country in our front sloped away from us rather abruptly, when, leaving a tolerable level space in the centre to the extent of 300 or 400 yards, it ascended in a sort of ridge on the opposite side, and along this ridge, amidst the bushy and broken ground that distinguished it, ran the enemy's entrenchments. In the open space alluded to parties of the enemy's horse would occasionally make a display by galloping about in a sort of bravado, until dispersed by a well-directed shrapnell from a neighbouring battery.

There was a post of considerable importance, as being the key of our right centre, denominated the White House picket. It was a large tiled building, previously appertaining to some reli-

gious purpose, and stood on an elevated, though isolated point, 300 yards or so in our front, and nearly central between us and the enemy. Being surrounded by a wall, and having a steep or rugged approach, it was admirably adapted for military purposes, and since our occupation of Rangoon, it had been held as an advanced picket. In the present instance it was of the greatest advantage, from being situated on that face of our position against which the enemy were directing their principal efforts, and was defended by 100 of the Madras European regiment, and 200 native infantry, with a couple of 6-pounders, under Lieut. Onslow, of the Madras artillery.

It was on the evening of the 4th of December, after a tedious day passed in the usual manner, either watching the movements of the enemy or speculating upon the (to us) unaccountable system of tactics adopted by the chief, that a staff officer made his appearance amongst us, and was closeted for some time with our colonel. The mysterious and important air of the gentleman in the cocked hat, denoting as it did his superior acquaintance with matters behind the curtain, was of course a sufficient indication to us subordinates, who were all eyes and ears, and madly eager for a dash at the opposite entrenchments,

that something was now certainly in the wind. The captain of our grenadiers was soon summoned to the consultation, and through him we learned that the enemy were to be attacked, by a combined movement, at daylight on the following morning, and that our flank companies, increased to 200 rank and file, were to be marched overnight to the White House, to take part in the operations of the morrow. Every movement, however, was to be made with the utmost secrecy, so as, if practicable, to take the enemy by surprise. Consequently, at dusk, I accompanied the grenadiers to the above-named post, after taking a hasty leave of my comrades. Another column of attack was to be formed at the Great Pagoda, to advance simultaneously with that from the White House, and, if I remember rightly, a second detachment of our men was marched off for the above duty at the same time. I need scarcely add, that the approaching fulfilment of our wishes was hailed with joy by us all, not doubting that a collision with the enemy would scatter them to the winds, with the effect of an "eagle in a dovecot"—a failure, or even a check, in a fair field, being altogether out of our calculations.

On reaching our destination, we were warmly

greeted by the garrison of the White House, amongst whom I found many old acquaintances. All hands were, of course, full of the contemplated attack, and we now learned more in detail of the proposed plan of operations. Our attack was to be directed against a part of the enemy's left, that being the most tangible, as well from its vicinity to our position as from the comparatively open nature of the ground it covered. A division of gunboats, under Captain Chads, R.N., was at daybreak to ascend the Puzendown creek, and open a heavy cannonade upon the enemy's rear, with which for some distance it ran nearly parallel. Simultaneously with this movement two columns of infantry were to penetrate the enemy's position, on different points. One of 1,100 men, and a troop of the Governor-General's body-guard, under Major Sale, were to advance from the Great Pagoda and, entering the trenches, endeavour to cut off the enemy's left; then, by a rapid movement to the right, they were to clear the trenches, and effect a junction with the other column. This, consisting of 600 men, under Major Walker, of the Madras army, was to advance from the White House, and, piercing the entrenchments, they were directed to drive everything before them till they united with Sale,

when the combined force might follow up the retreating enemy as far as practicable. The signal for the simultaneous advance of the two infantry columns was to be the discharge of a rocket from the Shoedagon, soon after daybreak; but owing to the greater distance Sale's column had to traverse before reaching the enemy, the signal was not to be made till they had reached a certain point previously fixed upon.

The interior of the White House, as well as I can remember, consisted merely of one spacious apartment, with the tiled roof visible overhead; this was now tenanted by the officers of the different detachments composing the garrison, whilst the men, about 400 in number, either found shelter in some of the exterior buildings, or bivouacked in the open air. The troops then present were, I think, 200 of the Madras European regiment, and 200 of the 3rd and 34th native infantry, which, at daybreak on the morrow, were to be joined by 100 of H.M.'s 89th regt. and another hundred men from the 18th regt. native infantry, making in all 600 men. Major Walker, of the 3rd light infantry, an officer of considerable experience and high character in the Madras army, had been specially selected by the general to command this column, and he arrived at the

post simultaneously with our detachment. The major had been absent for his health for some months, and only that day disembarked at Rangoon from Calcutta, being just in the nick of time for sharing in the honours of the occasion.

On that memorable evening thirteen of us, mostly old acquaintances, assembled round the frugal supper-table in the interior of the White House. The ominous number of *thirteen* did not pass unnoticed by the superstitious, which circumstance, occurring as it did on the eve of an engagement with the enemy, was looked upon as a gloomy prognostic to some of the party; but clouds do not rest long at such seasons on the brows of youthful warriors, who are ever full of ardour, "burning with high hope," and soon, despite the ill-omen, the cheroot was smoked and the grog was quaffed with undiminished relish. We all retired early to rest, and the whole thirteen of us were soon stretched upon the hard floor and buried in slumber, from which we were occasionally disturbed by the firing of a shell from our batteries, or some of the enemy's shot scattering the tiles of the roof that sheltered us, which, from its elevation, offered a tempting mark to their artillerymen; for, under cover of the trenches, they had, during

the day, brought their heavy guns to bear on many points of our lines with a troublesome effect. These trenches had encroached so much on the day in question that at night we could see the lights and hear the voices of the workmen, for they chiefly laboured at the entrenchments during the hours of darkness.

The excitement of each day ever insured to us a sound and refreshing sleep, and I never reposed more tranquilly than on this night; but—

—— the deep thunder, peal on peal afar,
And near, the beat of the alarming drum,
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star.

Thus, at this juncture, was every day ushered in by the batteries on either side thundering defiance at each other; but now the addition of the drum's note gave us a special summons to prepare for action. Our toilet was a simple affair, for having laid ourselves down ready dressed we had little else to do than to jump up, shake ourselves, buckle on our swords, and be ready to receive the never-failing cup of coffee from our faithful Maty boy. Soon after day dawned we were joined by the detachments of H.M.'s 89th and the 18th M.N.I., making together a total of 600 men; of these 300 were Europeans, being our flank companies, and the grenadiers of the

89th, under Capt. Rose, each company increased to 100 men. In addition to the ordinary firing, which has been described as at this time ushering in the break of day, we had now the gratification to hear a heavy cannonade in the direction of the Puzendown Creek, as the flotilla pounded away at the enemy's rear, several spent shots from which came bounding merrily towards us, after having traversed the enemy's position, this being, as it were, the middle distance. Whilst eagerly waiting for the signal to advance, every object and movement in our front was watched with the liveliest interest. Amongst other little incidents of the hour was the bold approach of a party of the enemy's horse towards us, to make a reconnaissance; they were, however, speedily dispersed by the bursting of two or three shrapnells amongst them from the 6-pounders, which were admirably directed by Lieut. Onslow, and gave the Burmans a foretaste of what we had in reserve for them.

We had been a long time under arms, and the sun had risen above the horizon, before the long-expected signal to advance was made; at length, however, it came, and was instantly and cheerily responded to by our bugles, from which now pealed on all sides the well-known "Advance!" The column was immediately in motion, and

began to find its way in single file down the steep and somewhat rugged ascent that led to the White House picket. In its immediate vicinity, and in front of the post we were quitting, the ground was broken, and thinly sprinkled with lofty shrubs and stunted bushes. On emerging from this there was a strip of level open ground to the extent of probably 400 or 500 yards, terminating in a gentle rise, where the ground again became broken and bushy; along the crest of this ran the trenches, one or two heavy guns commanding the open space in their front, and from the facility the ground afforded for the formation of the troops it was at this point that we decided upon penetrating the enemy's position. The column was no sooner discovered to be in motion, than it was exposed to a dropping fire of musketry on the left, whilst an occasional round shot from their heavy guns would pass over our heads with a rushing noise, as the enemy endeavoured to find the range. As yet the distance was too great for small arms to tell with much effect; but it was not unfelt, for we had scarcely advanced a hundred yards, when, in crossing a small brook which wound its way amongst the bushes, I saw the body of a sergeant of the 89th, who had been killed a few seconds before. This was the first

man that fell, and so early a death seemed an earnest of severe loss ere our day's work was completed.

The military movements of the day were something quite new to me, and perhaps to most of us, for hitherto we had, with very few exceptions, been accustomed to assail the enemy behind their stockades, after traversing a considerable extent of dense jungle, when success, frequently problematical, was as often attended with severe loss. In the present instance, however, matters looked much more promising, and everything tended to give our men confidence, for we were now about to meet the foe in what *we* called a fair field, though, upon consideration, it must be admitted, that the advantages were on our side. The enemy's numbers were certainly formidable, and their personal prowess considerable; but, on the other hand, they were devoid of all discipline, and their arms were wretched, whilst the comparatively open nature of the ground which was to be our battle-field would give full scope to all the advantages that flow from discipline. Relying on this, therefore, mainly as our sheet anchor, the little column of 600 disciplinarians fearlessly moved out to encounter untold masses of semi-savages! On entering

upon the open space that separated us from the point of attack we were formed into a column of sections, and immediately after of sub-divisions, which operation was conducted with as much regularity as upon a peaceful parade-ground, though at this period we were exposed to a galling fire of musketry and jingals in front and on our left flank, to which, however, we did not then return a shot. The musketry, it must be added, though heavy, was ill-directed, and did but little execution, for the enemy fired too low. I was on the left flank, and observed several musket-balls bury themselves in the ground within a few yards of the column.

As we moved steadily onwards, far to the right the town of Rangoon was visible, with the masts of the shipping, whilst in the left distance, amidst a mass of forest, Shoedagon glistened in the morning sunbeams. On our left flank, and in front, the ground has been described as sloping upwards, much broken by ravines and water-courses, and thickly sprinkled with shrubs, the intervals being mostly filled up with long grass. Under cover of these, as well as the trenches, which meandered amongst them, a hot fire was now poured in upon us, the whole place appearing suddenly alive with the enemy, and each

bush and tuft of grass contributing its cloud of smoke as their fire-arms were discharged behind them. The scene at this moment was very interesting, for, in spite of the fire to which we had been exposed, our progress had been steady, and each formation had been effected with admirable celerity and precision. Having now approached to within a short distance of the trenches, the time had arrived for extending our front previous to a charge. With this object we deployed into two lines of 300 men each, the Europeans being in front; but our gallant leader, Major Walker, who was stationed on the right, had scarcely given the word for the movement, when a ball from a jingal struck him in the forehead, and he fell lifeless from his horse. This was a heavy loss at such a moment, but his place was well supplied by Major Wahab, of the 34th L.I., another admirable officer, of whom all Madras men at that period were justly proud. I must not here omit to notice a curious sight that caught my eye, as we advanced towards the entrenchments. One of the enemy had stationed himself on a mound in their front, on which he was dancing and jumping with an air of defiance, at the same time brandishing a sword, apparently in each hand, and calling out to us in a tone of abuse.

At the time we deployed into line we were about 150 yards from the trenches; then, having poured in a volley, we advanced upon the enemy at the charge step and under a heavy fire of musketry and jingals in front and flank. In this manner, and with deafening hurrahs, we at length entered the formidable entrenchments, the distant view of which had long excited in us so much interest. Up to this point the enemy had stood their ground firmly; but our gallant fellows had no sooner burst in upon them than *sauve qui peut* was the order of the day, and a greater scene of disorder and carnage than that following our successful *entrée* into the enemy's position could scarcely be conceived. Just as we were entering the trenches Lieut. Butler, of the light company Madras European Regiment, had his left arm fractured by a musket-ball, and Captain Rose, commanding the grenadiers of the 89th, was struck down by a wound in his chest. He had a pistol stuck in his sash, which was the means of saving his life, for the ball, striking the pistol, severed the stock from the barrel, and in this state Captain Rose held the fragments up to me at the time the accident happened. He, poor fellow! did not after all long survive this narrow escape, for only two or three months after he,

together with many others, was killed in an unsuccessful attack upon some of the outworks of Denobew, on the Irrawaddy.

I wish I had a pen that could adequately describe the scene that now presented itself on all sides, but that far exceeds my very limited powers. Until we regularly tumbled in amongst them, the enemy appeared fully to have decided upon remaining where they were, trusting doubtless to some supposed magical influence in their entrenchments for keeping us at a respectful distance; great, therefore, was their confusion and disappointment to find their labour had all been in vain, and that these redoubtable works, that had cost them so much trouble and skill, were utterly valueless against the courage and vigour of Europeans, who leaped or scrambled over them with the greatest *nonchalance*. These warlike excavations were now, to a great extent, to prove the graves of the poor Burmans, and were rapidly being filled with the dead and dying. There were several successive lines of entrenchments; but, the first having been forced, the charm was broken, and all attempts at a rally were of little or no avail. A spirited attempt to rally the fugitives was made, however, on the part of some of their chiefs—fine, bold, muscular fellows, clad in

dresses of velvet and gold, and mounted upon strong ponies, and of whom I had a good view at the distance only of a few yards. Nothing could exceed their courageous and energetic bearing; but all efforts to instil a portion of their own spirit into their panic-stricken followers seemed ineffectual.

The discipline of our own people was by no means improved by their success; on the contrary, we had no sooner carried the position than our men broke loose from the ranks, and pursued the foe helter-skelter, in the most independent manner. Whilst they were in this scattered state the officers, of course, experienced very considerable uneasiness, which was not a little increased by a cry that the Cassay horse were in our rear! And so in truth they were, and within an ace of cutting off a party of wounded that were proceeding to the lines, when a few well-pointed shots from the White House dispersed the assailants, and secured the retreat of our poor fellows, who otherwise would assuredly have been massacred to a man. As it was, had they dashed boldly in amongst us, they might have chopped us up in detail with every facility; but though the opportunity was favourable, the

pluck was wanting to take advantage of it. The appearance, however, of the cavalry in our rear, which was notified by sound of bugle, had the good effect of once more concentrating our scattered ranks; and so hastily did we re-form under the influence of the alarm that, upon casting my eye through the company, I found nearly every other man belonged to H.M. 89th, whilst their places were, in a similar manner, supplied by our men!

It has been said that the day's operations were mainly directed against a part of the enemy's left wing, the troops composing which, to the amount probably of 8,000 or 10,000, formed now a dense mass of fugitives in our front, escape from our bayonets being now their only object. It was some time before such a confused body, entangled as they were amidst their own entrenchments, and by the intricate nature of the ground, could extricate themselves, and in the meanwhile we had it all our own way, our lads having nothing to do but to load and fire as fast as they could. Numbers of the enemy fell, but their assailants were too few, and too much dispersed, to cripple them as could have been wished, and when they were fairly under weigh and in retreat, we had no chance whatever with them!

Whilst the enemy were jammed up in a sort of hollow, and we were blazing away into the midst of them from higher ground, my attention was much attracted by one of the mounted chieftains, who, like a gallant soldier, was urging on his followers by voice and gesture. Though I could not but admire his bravery, I must confess that I was so anxious to unseat him, that I offered a soldier that was near me a bottle of brandy to knock him off his horse; but the clumsy fellow fired one or two shots at him without effect, and though I begged hard, he could not be induced to give me up his firelock for a trial! Brandy, be it known to the unlearned, in quantities varying from a glass to a bottle, is a species of liquid payment much in vogue in the East for any odd jobs done by the lower classes, whether European or native, from their European superiors. A gentleman does not carry a purse in his pocket in India, there being comparatively little gold, and no paper money, beyond the presidencies; consequently, a dram or more of *brandy shrub* is not unfrequently substituted for a rupee, the brandy-bottle being in many cases much too near at hand. The captain of my company was in the habit of promising the first man that entered

a stockade after himself a bottle of brandy as the reward of valour, and truly the soldier of those days esteemed such a prize much more highly than a purse of silver. The establishment of temperance societies in many parts of India, it is sincerely hoped, has much lessened the taste for dram-drinking in those parts, and I have just read with real pleasure, in Sir Robert Sale's despatch of the defence of Jellalabad, that he attributes the high health of the European troops, and their remarkable state of discipline, to the two circumstances of their being constantly employed, and deprived of their usual allowance of spirits. But to return to our operations in the trenches.

On the day in question, through some inadvertency, the signal for Walker's column to advance was made too soon; the consequence was, we were fully engaged with the enemy before Major Sale's column had finally turned their flank, and thus the enemy's retreat was not effectually cut off, as it otherwise might have been. Sale's bugles, however, were now heard pealing away to the left, and immediately after, a rattling fire of musketry in that direction satisfied us that the gallant Sale, who has since earned for himself such imperishable renown by

his glorious conduct at Jellalabad, was fairly engaged, and would drive everything before him as he ever did. The enemy still occupied an eminence to the left in considerable strength, where their standards were flying, and from which they still kept up a fire from their artillery, and on this point many of the fugitives rallied. This position was now being attacked by the other column, and we were rapidly put in motion to co-operate with them.

Whilst advancing to unite with Sale, and put the finishing stroke to the day's work, a sergeant of the light company, having captured a stray pony gorgeously caparisoned, that had lately carried a chief, jumped upon his back and galloped in amongst us, shouting out "Here comes Bundoolah!" to the infinite amusement of all hands. The joke took amazingly, though to be sure it did not speak very highly for our discipline: perhaps our pretensions were not very great in this respect; but in warring with barbarians there will necessarily be many little deviations from "the Rules and Regulations of the Army." In due time we formed a junction with the other column; but having made a *détour* to the right, with the view, I conceive, of taking the enemy in reverse, we

only reached the ground to be witnesses of their utter dispersion, like chaff before the wind.

Thus the troops forming the enemy's left wing were, by the operations of the morning, completely scattered: the whole of the ground that fronted our right was cleared, for a time at least, and all the enemy's *matériel*, such as it was, fell into our hands. The country about us presented quite a wreck. In the distance, on all sides, might be descried parties of the enemy hotly, but vainly, followed by some of our people, whilst in the vicinity of the trenches the ground was covered with the killed and wounded, amidst spears, muskets, jingals, dismounted cannon, entrenching tools, flags, piles of ammunition, &c. &c. At the point where we joined Sale the enemy's loss had been most severe; here their dead were lying about very thickly, and I think I counted fifty bodies within one of their entrenchments. Their total loss in killed and wounded it would be most difficult to estimate in such an extended field, but it must have been very heavy—not less than 700 or 800, and probably many more.

Whilst wandering about to gratify our curiosity, some of us were attracted to a spot by the groans of a wounded man. Upon approaching

it we found a remarkably handsome and well-made young Burman bleeding to death underneath some bushes, whither he had crawled for shelter. He was unusually fair-complexioned, and from his dress and other marks we had little doubt of his being a man of rank. He had, however, lost all consciousness, and was evidently past recovery; with a humane motive, an officer who witnessed the sufferings of the dying man, desired a soldier to despatch him, which he instantly did by firing a ball through his head. This summary mode of disposing of a man, as if he had been a horse, startled me not a little at the time; but after all, under such circumstances, there seems no good ground of objection against such an act, provided an executioner is forthcoming.

The trophies of the day were thirty pieces of cannon, iron and brass, 200 or 300 jingals, 2,000 muskets, besides entrenching tools, colours, and a great abundance of ammunition; indeed, I well remember the great quantity of powder that we purposely blew up after the action in different parts of the field, it being unsuited for our use. The loss of our gallant leader, Major Walker, was the only drawback to the operations of the

morning, which were of so extensive and satisfactory a nature that in the general orders for the day the parole issued was the word "*Victory*," and the countersign "*Complete*." Poor Walker's remains were consigned to the grave, with military honours, on the afternoon of the day he fell, and in alluding to his loss, the general spoke of him in his despatches as one of India's "best and bravest soldiers."

CHAP. X.

DEFENCE OF KIMMENDINE.

Though these sketches are intended to be in a great measure independent of each other, the interesting period at which the last broke off renders it almost imperative to resume the narrative, and to continue up to a certain point the chain of events, for it may be presumed that many who honour these pages with a perusal are not very conversant with the details of our operations in distant Ava (a very general and perhaps an allowable ignorance); and in this case, though they may be fully aware that no serious calamity befel us on the occasion in question, the description of the investment of our position at Rangoon by 60,000 barbarians will naturally lead them to look for the conclusion of the whole matter, and

see how a handful of British troops, weakened by disease and privations, extricated themselves from difficulties and dangers of no ordinary kind.

It will be remembered how completely the enemy's left wing was routed on the morning of the 5th of December by the columns under Majors Sale and Walker, the details of which were given at length. In spite, however, of the advantages obtained in our encounters with the foe, the important outpost of Kimmendine was as hotly pressed as ever, the firing there being incessant; on this score, therefore, we were still full of anxiety, and our morning's work in the trenches was no sooner over than a detachment of the Madras European Regiment was ordered to hold itself in readiness to embark at the wharf at sunset for Kimmendine as a reinforcement, and, being next for duty, I was directed to accompany it. Now, I believe I was generally found ready to fulfil with cheerfulness any duty that devolved upon me; and in the present case, though worn out with fatigue, having been on the move from daybreak, I packed up my knapsack, and after dining somewhat hastily upon a buffalo's heart, which was then considered rather a dainty morsel, I trudged down to the place ap-

pointed with my detachment, to be ready for embarkation. The day's work we had already encountered would have been generally considered much more than enough for a moderate man, but, in addition to the fatigue already undergone during the morning, I was far from being well in health, having for some time previously been suffering from ulcerated legs, accompanied by considerable dyspepsia, the incipient symptoms, as it proved, of a severe attack of scurvy, with which I was soon afterwards laid up; the effect (it need scarcely be added) of a salt-meat diet, with very little intermission, for the space of seven or eight months, together with severe privations and constant exposure.

When my detachment of twenty-five men, together with a party of sepoy's that accompanied it, had stepped into the flat-bottomed boats that were to convey us to our destination, the setting sun was close to the horizon, and, like a red-hot shot (a fiery simile, but not an inappropriate one,) was sinking rapidly behind the town of Dalla, as we gazed upon it across the broad surface of the Rangoon river. We freighted two or three boats, and were taken in tow by the *Diana* steamer, that indefatigable little vessel, the first of the kind that ever ploughed the Indian seas. Though

small—not exceeding, I believe, 60-horse power—her value on the Irrawaddy was incalculable, in contending against its rapid current. At times, armed with swivels and Congreve rockets, it would, against wind and tide, carry dismay and destruction amongst the enemy's war-boats. In the present instance the *Diana* was the connecting link between the outpost for which we were bound and the British head-quarters. Nothing, however, could have been more tedious than our passage, for though the distance by water did not exceed ten or twelve miles it was nearly midnight before we reached our destination, having made but little more than two miles per hour, owing to the strength of the stream, which at times runs at the rate of six knots; we were, consequently, from five to six hours performing the distance. The occasion is one I shall ever remember; darkness soon set in, nothing scarcely being visible save the sparkling foam of the water agitated by the paddles, and the faint outlines of the steamer's clumsy rigging against the dusky sky. On either bank dark dense masses of underwood overhung the stream, and here all was still, though busy Fancy ever and anon would people the dark covert with hostile figures, and lead us at every suspicious

point to expect a yell and a volley of musketry. In truth, there was every opportunity for such a contingency, for at times we were most invitingly near the bank. Though silence reigned in our immediate vicinity, there was no lack of noise in the distance, for as the darkness set in increased firing had been heard in the direction of Kimmendine, and as we wended our dark and tedious way against the stream, the heavy booming sound of the cannon and the sharp crack of musketry would strike with almost painful distinctness upon the ear, as they came wafted on the midnight breeze, from the isolated and beleaguered outpost in the heart of the forest.

About midnight, amid such scenes and sounds, weary, hungry and drowsy, we at length rounded the point which was to give us a view of Kimmendine, for a view we were sure to have from the flashes of the fire-arms. The steamer's approach, the paddles of which had of course been heard at a distance, seemed to have been a signal to the enemy for a vigorous attack upon the works, under a conviction that a reinforcement was at hand; consequently, when we first caught a sight of the place it seemed encircled by a belt of fire from the discharges of musketry on both sides, whilst two small vessels of war, the *Sophie*

and *Satellite*, at anchor abreast of the stockade, blazed away most lustily from their carronades, one of them being so situated as in some measure to enfilade the hostile entrenchments. The light produced by this heavy firing enabled us to see our way, and under the guns of the *Sophie* we at length effected our landing about midnight, but not without exposure to the enemy's musketry, which played upon us most harmoniously during the operation.

On landing I duly reported myself to Major Yates, then commanding the garrison, a good and zealous officer. In the present instance he was sitting in the open air in his camp chair, *en déshabille*, and, as well as I can remember, with his night-cap on. A group of officers encircled him; they had been anxiously looking for our arrival, and now greedily devoured all the details we were ready enough to give relative to the victorious operations of the morning before Rangoon, the heavy firing in which direction had led them to hope for some such results, and, though pretty well done up by want of rest and want of food, I could not but feel a peculiar gratification in being the first to bring an account of the dashing action in which I had shared. The spot we were assembled upon at this unseasonable hour

was an open space on the river's bank, and outside the front face of the stockade; but it was defended on either flank by curtains extending from the stockade to the river. This, as the point of communication with the boats &c., was a favourite lounge by day or night; and here, moreover, we had the benefit of the cool breeze over the water.

I have said that the enemy attacked the place almost simultaneously with our arrival; but, as usual, the withering fire of musketry which we were enabled to pour upon them from all sides rendered it quite as unavailing as all preceding attempts had been. After a time they drew off again to their burrows, which at one point had been brought to within eighteen or twenty yards of the stockade; but though they desisted from any open attack during the remainder of the night, every moving object on either side was the signal for a general blaze, to which after a time we became so accustomed that the heavy slumber of our wearied carcasses was scarcely disturbed by it, albeit shot-holes were frequently discernible in the morning through the cloth of the tents that sheltered us. On the first night of my arrival I shared a small tent with H—, of my own corps, who had been at the outpost

during the whole period. He had a most narrow escape on one occasion, for having incautiously, whilst taking a peep at the trenches, allowed the upper part of his head to show itself above the parapet, the surface of his oil-skin shakoe was at the same moment grazed by a musket-ball. Indeed they watched us in the narrowest manner, and, though not generally expert marksmen, their extreme vicinity, and the advantage of firing from a rest, enabled them to tell upon us most fearfully. We were, in truth, never safe from the effects of their shot, either by day or night, sleeping or waking; for the bamboo fence that separated us from our foes was in many parts so frail and rotten that a ball, after having perforated it, would not unfrequently kill or wound one of the garrison. Our walls had fallen so much to decay since we first gained possession of the place, that, though sufficient to protect us against a surprise, they were a very inadequate defence against even musket-balls, to say nothing of an occasional cannon or jingal-shot.

Kimmendine has already figured so often in these sketches, from its having been the scene of so many feats of arms, that it will be sufficient for our purpose here to repeat that it was connected with the main position at Rangoon by a

narrow footpath through a dense forest, terminating at the base of the Shoedagon pagoda, at the distance of about four miles; by this road all communication was now, of course, effectually cut off. The distance by water must have been nine or ten miles, owing to the winding of the river, and this means of escape was still open to the garrison, in event of their being so seriously pressed upon as to render a retreat necessary. The troops that garrisoned the post during the period of its investment were the 26th Madras Native Infantry (about 500 strong), 140 of the Madras European Regiment, and a small detachment of the Madras Artillery, the whole being under the command of Major Yates, of the first-named corps, better known subsequently as the "Hero of Kim-mendine." We thus mustered from 600 to 700 men, but a large number were in hospital from sickness and wounds, and the great extent of the works we occupied, capable as they were of sheltering many thousand men, caused the duty to fall very severely upon all hands. In the vast area of the stockade, our men were literally "few and far between."

When Bundoolah's grand army sat down before Rangoon, on the morning of the 1st December, a corps of 5,000 or 6,000 men, as near as

we could estimate it, was detailed for the reduction of Kimmendine, to which operation the Burmese general evidently, and not without good cause, attached considerable importance. The enemy attacked the place after their own fashion—that is, by intrenching themselves, and the vicinity of the jungle to the stockade, which in some parts came actually in contact with it, enabled them to form their line of circumvallation with great rapidity, and at a most inconvenient proximity; indeed, as before said, in one point the trenches could not have been more than twenty paces distant.

From the morning of the 1st up to the period I joined them, the firing on both sides had been almost incessant; so warmly, indeed, did we salute the enemy on the first day of their appearance that it was said the garrison expended 50,000 rounds of musket-ammunition on that day alone! We had two or three guns mounted on different parts of the works, but they availed little against an underground enemy; whereas their guns, of which they had three or four, did us considerable damage. One in particular had caused so much annoyance that a sortie was determined upon to rid us of the nuisance. It was mounted on a breastwork that crossed the

road leading to Rangoon, defended in front by a ditch and abattis and flanked by thick jungle, and might have been distant from us seventy or eighty yards. A party of forty men, half Europeans, was detailed for this service under Capt. Page, then doing duty with the Madras European Regiment; but from some cause or other the attempt was a failure, the party having been repulsed with severe loss before they could reach the object of their attack, short though the distance was. The party was, in fact, far too weak in numbers to achieve anything of the kind, and it is surprising that they were not altogether cut off, rushing headlong as they did amongst hidden masses of the enemy, who lined both flanks of the thickly-wooded path traversed by the little band, and poured upon it such a deadly fire that nothing but a hasty retreat saved them from utter annihilation. One officer—Lieut. Smith, of the 26th—was shot through the body, but happily was enabled to reach the stockade: his wound, though of the most dangerous description, terminated favourably. This was the only sortie attempted during the siege, and its untoward result discouraged our commandant from any further experiments of the kind, though there were many who would have most willingly again

ventured their lives on a similar service. With this exception the military operations during the period of the investment, from the 1st to the 8th, consisted in either party pouring in a hot fire whenever any living thing showed itself, and generally at daybreak and dusk there was a forward movement on the part of the enemy to attack us, under cover of a heavy fire from all arms, and a deafening yell: these efforts, however, were never carried home, for nothing human could long withstand the leaden storm we poured upon them through our loop-holes.

Simultaneously with the night attacks, large fire-rafts were floated down from Pagoda Point, just above us, for the benefit of the men-of-war at anchor off the place; but these machines, though frightful enough when seen at dead of night, seldom did us any damage, so promptly were they dealt with by our gallant seamen.

The primitive tenement that sheltered some half-a-dozen officers of the 'Lambs,' constructed of bamboo and dry grass, was completely riddled by the enemy's shot, and many of our native servants were so paralyzed by fear, that for safety they were accustomed to jam themselves in amongst their masters' bullock-trunks, and continue immovable the greater part of the

day, much to our inconvenience. To be sure the missiles of our adversaries were sufficiently troublesome, and our lives were then held by a very precarious tenure. Musket-balls are no respectors either of things or persons, and proofs of this we now had every hour. In one instance, when washing my hands in the morning, a shot smashed an earthen jar containing water close to me; on another occasion, at night, a jingal-ball shattered a large glass table-shade (used in India to screen the candles from the wind) upon the mess-table of the 26th Regt., at the time (if I rightly remember) the officers were assembled at dinner. But these are trifles, and are merely recorded here to show the inconvenient interruptions to which we were liable, even at our most social hours. It was a beautiful and interesting sight to watch the course of the shells, which we frequently discharged at night from a small bomb-vessel anchored off the place; these passed over our heads like meteors or falling stars, and exploded in the enemy's entrenchments, the effect of which, in the darkness, was very grand.

During my tour of duty at Kimmendine on this occasion, "my lodging was on the cold ground," for cold it certainly was, in spite of the tropical sun that shone during the day.

Though the thermometer does not descend to freezing-point, the nights and mornings in those latitudes are very keen, the degree of cold being much increased by local causes, especially the uncultivated state of the country, and our scanty covering and constant exposure to the damp night air added much to our discomfort. My bed at this period was a strip of carpet, the size of a rug, and when the ground was wet a little straw or grass underneath helped to keep one high and dry. At this stirring time, for the space of at least a month, I slept every night in my clothes, and either upon the ground or on the deck of a boat, for it must be remembered that we had no rest from the day we embarked on the expedition to Pegue. My health had been long failing me, and the hard duty to which I was now subject brought on, in addition to other inconveniences, a sharp attack of dysentery; my legs, moreover, were so ulcerated that I could not crawl about without the assistance of a stick. In this lame manner, however, I contrived to scramble through my tour of duty, though it must be confessed I was fitter for the hospital than for the battle-field. The state of affairs at Kimmendine rendered it necessary for a considerable portion of the garrison to remain

under arms all night in the shape of pickets, and, to insure vigilance, the officers commanding them were forbidden to sit down during their tour of duty, which, I rather think, did not on that special occasion exceed three or four hours. When my turn came to be on the alert, I was soon so weak and exhausted that I was compelled to send for a chair, and, following Nature's laws, to the neglect of all "*standing orders*," I was instantly sound asleep, albeit the frequent firing throughout the night would, under ordinary circumstances, have proved an effectual bar to slumbering on one's post.

The night of the 7th passed off as noisily as ever, but on the following morning an unusual stillness seemed to pervade the enemy's encampment, and as daylight broke upon us it was with no small gratification we discovered the foe had decamped during the night, leaving us once more at liberty. During the day, we received intelligence from head-quarters to the effect that, the enemy's centre, having not only maintained its ground, but pushed on its approaches to within a hundred yards of our guns, in spite of the licking we had given them on the 5th, was attacked and completely scattered by four columns, amounting to 1,500 men, on the morning of the

7th, after which they retreated by the Kykloo road, leaving at last the ground clear in our right front, and in the vicinity of the Great Pagoda. It was this successful operation, in all probability, that induced the enemy to draw off from before Kimmendine, proving to them, as it did, how utterly hopeless were all their efforts against us. When we had thoroughly satisfied ourselves that the coast was clear, a party of us went out to reconnoitre the ground and take a survey of the deserted position. This was mainly screened from view by thick jungle, being a succession of intrenchments entirely surrounding the stockade, and capable of sheltering many thousand men; the enemy's force was differently estimated from 4,000 to 6,000. Save a dead body here and there, the embers of their last night's fires, and the appearance of the trees and shrubs that had been cruelly mutilated by our showers of shot, there was little of interest to greet our eyes, for the foe had taken special care to leave nothing behind that we could possibly convert into a trophy,—guns, intrenching tools and all having been carried off. We could not, however, but gaze with very considerable interest on the woody haunts of the besiegers, under cover of which they had been dealing death

amongst our ranks for many days. We were surprised not to see more dead bodies, for the enemy's loss before the place must have been very great; they always, however, displayed much care and cunning in concealing their casualties, and large numbers were, doubtless, buried in the vicinity of their trenches. In our progress round the works we fell in with the bodies of some of our men that had been killed a few days previously in the unlucky sortie. They were lying on the spot where they had fallen, on one side of the path, and had been untouched by the enemy, their uniform and accoutrements being still upon them; they presented a melancholy spectacle. The fact of finding them in this state was a proof of the respect in which our enemy held us, even after a reverse. We were much struck with the effect of our shot upon the trees near us, the bark of which had been torn off in a remarkable manner; and on the northern or upper face of the stockade the broadsides of the men-of-war had effectually cleared the ground, by laying prostrate a vast number of large trees.

The loss we sustained during the siege was about seventy men killed and wounded—less, perhaps, than might have been expected, considering the constant exposure to which the

troops were liable. The defence of the post, however, was considered to reflect great credit on Major Yates and all concerned, both sepoy and Europeans being animated throughout by the finest spirit, though the duty was incessant and the privations severe. The event called forth a special order from the Governor-General of India, directing the word "Kimmendine" to be worn henceforth on the colours and appointments of the 26th Madras Native Infantry; but, very unjustly, the honour was not extended to the detachment of the Madras European Regiment, upon the absurd plea of its not being the headquarters of the corps: we mustered, however, 140 men at Kimmendine during the siege, being very nearly half the effective strength of the regiment; and this circumstance alone might surely have justified the extension of the honour to the "Lambs;" indeed, a case so exactly in point has lately occurred that I conceive it only has to be officially pleaded in order to secure the distinction for the regiment. I allude to the late gallant defence of Kahun, in Scinde, by a detachment of Bombay Native Infantry, under Capt. Browne; in consideration of which, the honour of wearing "Kahun" on their colours and appointments was granted to the whole

corps. Poor Major Yates, however, did not long enjoy the distinctions he had been so instrumental in obtaining, having fallen a victim to cholera a short time subsequently, whilst proceeding up the Irrawaddy.

Of the hosts that encircled us none now remained, save the troops that occupied Dalla, where they had strongly stockaded themselves, and showed no disposition to move, in spite of our successes in other quarters. To dispose of these gentry, a column under the command of Lieut. Parlby, of the Madras Army, consisting of part of H.M.'s 89th regiment, the flank companies of the Madras European Regiment and some native troops, crossed the river on the 10th. The attack was eminently successful, the enemy having been routed with considerable slaughter, whilst our loss was trifling. Amongst the wounded were Capt. Roy, of the Madras European Regiment; Lieut. Dowdall, H.M.'s 89th, and Lieut. Glover, 12th Madras Native Infantry, who lost an arm upon the service. The enemy's dispersion was now looked upon as complete, and they were considered to be in full retreat, when suddenly intelligence reached us that Bundoolah had rallied a large force at Kokein, two or three miles only to the northward of Shoedagon, which was strongly

stockaded. Undaunted apparently by their numerous reverses here, once more, but for the last time, the Burmese showed a hostile front, and no time was lost on our part in beating up their quarters.

On the morning of the 15th, 1,500 men, Europeans and natives marched out under the personal command of Sir Archibald Campbell, to the attack of Kokein. The position was strong and elevated, and the two stockades that protected it displayed in their construction an unusual degree of ingenuity and talent. Nevertheless in about twenty minutes from the time the columns advanced to the assault these extensive works were in our possession, and the vast body of the enemy that garrisoned them, estimated at 20,000 men, completely routed. Our loss on this occasion was heavy, especially in officers, one hundred and fifty men and not less than nineteen officers having been killed and wounded. Of these, seventy men and eleven officers belonged to H.M.'s 13th Light Infantry, whose lot it was to attack the works at a point where they were exposed to a murderous fire; the loss is very severe when we bear in mind that in this affair the corps did not muster more than 220 men. The gallant Sale and, I think, Dennie

were amongst the wounded—both since so celebrated for their services in Affghanistan. Of the four officers attached to the Madras Pioneers, three were badly wounded; indeed all engaged had some rough work on that day; but the victory was decisive, the enemy, after this, having quitted the vicinity of Rangoon, and retreated to Denobew, on the Irrawaddy. Great havoc was made with the bayonet, and nearly 3,000 muskets, besides jingals, several iron guns, and Burman military *matériel* of all kinds, fell into our hands. The firelocks, however, were wretched tools, but, inasmuch as they were an irreparable loss to the enemy, we thought highly of the prize.

During the progress of the operations on the 15th our little garrison was in a considerable state of anxiety and excitement, for we knew the attack was to be made, and, the distance not exceeding six or seven miles, the firing was distinctly heard. We, however, were not without our share in the matter, for a party of the garrison was detached in the direction of Kumaroot, for the purpose of cutting up the enemy in their anticipated retreat, which it was deemed probable would be by this route. The strictest silence was enjoined, and we advanced stealthily for two or three miles through the jungle, passing *en route*

several deserted stockades, being a portion of those captured by General Macbean in the previous July, when we slaughtered so many of the enemy. In this vicinity, at a spot where two paths crossed, we lay in ambush for an hour or two, screening ourselves as well as we could amidst the bushes, and preserving the most profound silence. The firing in the distance at length died away, and though we caught a glimpse of a few far-off figures gliding rapidly through the underwood (strong presumptive evidence as to the issue of the combat), our party had no opportunity offered them of doing any execution beyond sending half-a-dozen random shots in the direction of the fugitives.

Whilst the enemy were in our vicinity I should not omit to mention that few days elapsed without one or more of the enemy's war-boats, some of them carrying a vast number of men, and armed with 9 or 6-pounder guns, being captured by our men-of-war and row-boats stationed at Kimmendine. Further in connection with the events detailed must be noticed an extensive fire which broke out at Rangoon at midnight on the 13th, the light of which was sufficiently visible at the outpost to startle us all from our couches. It was the work of incendiaries, and was to have

been the signal for a simultaneous attack from the Burman army, which, however, was never made. Much mischief was done by the fire, and private property suffered severely: the mess of the Madras European Regiment had store consumed to the amount of Rs. 5,000.

With the affair, or rather victory, of Kokien terminated all the enemy's efforts to expel us from Rangoon, immediately after which, dispirited and disorganised, they were in full retreat for Denobew. During the fifteen days they had been in front of our position the fighting had been incessant, and the enemy's loss was estimated by the general in his despatches at 6,000 men, to say nothing of their heavy losses in guns and *matériel* of all kinds. Our loss was likewise heavy in proportion, being for the same period 40 officers and 500 men killed and wounded, out of the 4,000 or 5,000 engaged.

Upon the 20th, a few days subsequently to the events narrated, I returned with my detachment to head-quarters, but in wretched health. Hitherto the excitement that prevailed had enabled me to hold out in some measure against the inroads of disease; but this having now subsided, the scurvy with which I was attacked broke out with all its virulence, and I was now compelled to "report sick" and enrol myself on the doctor's list.

The scurvy is generally supposed to be merely a cutaneous complaint, originating from a poor diet; but this, to a great extent, is a mistaken notion, for the land-scurvy, that was so destructive to our troops in Ava, was unattended with any eruption whatever, excepting upon the legs, which were often much ulcerated. The symptoms were livid and very tender gums, excessive loss of flesh and great debility. The appetite was at times unnaturally ravenous, whilst the digestive powers were very weak; and, to crown all, the patient was generally afflicted with diarrhoea or dysentery. I suffered long in my own person from most of the distressing symptoms, and was woefully reduced in flesh, though naturally one of the "lean kine." A scurvy arising from an impoverished state of the blood, the object of course must be to purify and enrich the blood by a wholesome and generous diet; but such a remedy had hitherto been more easily prescribed than followed. Now, however, the resources of the country being thrown more open through the dispersion of the Burmese army, there was no lack of buffalo beef; but the want of vegetables was still severely felt, the country producing but few suited to the fastidious palate of Europeans. As a grand event in reference to the scarcity that had so long prevailed, I must not

forget to mention the circumstance of the whole army having been regaled with *turtle* for two or three days, some time previously, a ship having been despatched expressly for a cargo of these animals to Diamond Island, celebrated for them, and situated at the mouth of the Bassein river, on the southern coast of Pegue. The flesh was served out to the troops by the commissariat by the pound, as beef or pork, and we usually dressed it like a beef-steak, which it much resembled both in taste and appearance. What fell to my share was wanting neither in eggs or green fat, though I suspect these dainty adjuncts were not duly appreciated by many of us, in the absence of those condiments so requisite for serving up the dish in the true aldermanic style.

Independent of an abundant supply of provisions, there was now every prospect of securing, through the assistance of the natives, a sufficiency of land and water carriage, in the shape of buffalo carts and canoes, in addition to our own scanty resources, as would enable our general at length to take the offensive and move upon the capital, the road to which we now conceived to be well open; for the enemy having fairly measured their strength with us, and expended their best efforts, the brunt of the war was justly

looked upon as over, our troops having comparatively little more to do than to walk over the course. In truth, it was at Rangoon and its vicinity where the strength of the Burman was broken, and his pride humbled, that being the theatre upon which most of the actions were fought.

It was only a few days after our crowning engagement with the enemy that I had the satisfaction of eating my first Christmas dinner in Ava ; and a very decent affair it was, considering the barbarous state of the times and place. Recent successes, however, had soon a favourable effect upon the commissariat, and mess tables now groaned under mighty sirloins of buffalo beef (the buffalo of Pegue is a monstrous animal, and consequently somewhat coarse in the grain), whilst the dinner would be made up of the lighter and more elegant accompaniments of the same animal, such as steaks, liver, and tripe, the head being converted into soup, for which it was an admirable ingredient. I have never dined off horse-flesh, but I cannot suppose it to be much inferior to that of the Burman buffalo.

A Christmas-day at Rangoon certainly contrasted strongly with that festal day in Old England ; but, though unadorned by its veil of

frost or mantle of unsullied snow, there was a respectable keenness in the air, in spite of a brilliant sun and a cloudless sky, that did honour to the occasion, and blue noses and benumbed fingers at an early hour in the morning carried our thoughts back to the mother-country. The day was ushered in by the firing of a royal salute and the hoisting of the British flag, the usual compliment on all such days at military stations to the eastward. Beyond this empty acknowledgment and a somewhat better dinner than usual, there was nothing to distinguish the natal day of the Saviour of the world, there being no provision whatever for the performance of divine service to the troops, even on the Sabbaths—a lamentable oversight, or rather negligence, on the part of our Christian rulers, which has been alluded to elsewhere; but such a glaring defect, inconsistency, or whatever else it may be denominated, cannot be too much dwelt upon, in the hope of thereby securing a remedy for the future. Our mighty power and extensive influence in the East were surely given to us for some far nobler object than to fill our coffers with “barbaric pearl and gold;” but, after all, what have the successive *Governments* of India contributed towards her *moral* elevation? That

good has been effected of late years is true, but this has mainly been brought about by the unceasing and disinterested exertions of societies of private individuals; of course I allude to the various missionary and other philanthropic institutions, whose operations were for a long time rather thwarted than encouraged by the Government, under a short-sighted apprehension that they were calculated to loosen our hold upon the country—as if the abuse of the talent intrusted to our charge was not much more likely to bring about such a result! But to revert to our first Christmas festivities in Ava.

On that day I had the pleasure of dining with a friend at the mess of the 28th M.N.I., who were quartered at the foot of Old Shoedagon. There were some active caterers amongst them; and moreover an unusually good, I may almost say brotherly, feeling existing amongst the officers, their mess-table was in every respect a most agreeable resort. Indeed, a short time subsequently to this period, having been recommended a change to a higher ground for the benefit of my health, I passed some time most pleasantly in their company as the guest of a dear friend, whom I soon after lost, and whose remains are now mouldering on the banks of the

Irrawaddy, he having fallen a victim to fever on the line of march. The kindly feeling I then experienced from the 28th N.I., will ever be fondly remembered by me. Upon the occasion referred to, we were regaled with something better than buffalo beef. What the bill of fare was I cannot now say, but I have a distinct recollection of the dinner being a very creditable one, a sort of *oasis* of plenty amidst a desert of privations and hardships—a bright spot in a savage land. Amongst the guests assembled at that hospitable board was the gallant Major (now Sir Robert) Sale, with his head bound up from the effects of a wound received in the last encounter, a few days previously. Others, it is probable, then present were similarly circumstanced; but this officer has since become so deservedly celebrated that one cannot but revert with a sort of pride and pleasure to having been thus familiarly associated with him.

A short time subsequently, about the middle of February, the army advanced into the interior, in two columns—one by land, under the personal command of Sir Archibald Campbell, and the other by water, under Brigadier General (now Sir Willoughby) Cotton.

CHAP. XI.

THE IRRAWADDY—FALL OF DENOBEW, ETC.

Æneas, when he is described by Virgil as “*stans celsâ in puppi jam certus eundi*,” could not have been more satisfied at the decisive step he had taken, and at the prospect before him, than I was on the evening of the 5th of March, 1825, whilst seated in my chair on the “lofty poop” of the *Virginia* transport, in the Rangoon river, comfortably smoking my Chinsurah cheroot, with my legs against the taffrail, and in conversation with one of the mates speculating on the probability of a speedy run to Masulipatam, for thither I was bound in search of health, after nearly a twelvemonth’s buffeting with the Burmans. I was ordered to proceed to Masulipatam in charge of one hundred sick men

Trautson

THE MOUTH OF THE RANGOON RIVER.

Hoodley & Co.

returning to India. To place a sick man in charge of one hundred others as sick as himself may sound rather strange in some ears; but such a charge is less onerous than may be imagined; invalid soldiers, especially when cramped up between decks in a transport, being as little disposed as they are able to give much trouble. My detachment consisted entirely of sepoy, details of different regiments, and consequently I was quite a stranger to them; nevertheless, we got on very well together during the fortnight's voyage, I having little else to do than to sign the daily indents for the issue of their simple rations, and to pay them a visit between decks to see that the place was clean and that they were otherwise properly cared for. The poor fellows under my care could, of course, indulge in many pleasing anticipations of happy meetings with their friends and families on their native shore, after encountering dangers and privations of no common kind in a strange land. All, however, were not to realise these happy prospects, as many (if my memory does not deceive me) found a watery grave *in transitu*, the victims of foul ulcers or a wasting dysentery, contracted in the faithful discharge of their duty.

I have spoken of the pleasing anticipations my

sick charge could indulge in touching a meeting with their friends : the *sahib* had his too, but they were of a different cast, his *home* being much further west. Still the prospect of revisiting India had bright spots even for me, and, though no dear relatives awaited my arrival there with open arms, I looked forward with no small gratification to the enjoyment of a few of those comforts of civilized life from which I had been so long debarred, especially the luxury of good bread and butter and well-washed linen, scarce or rather inferior commodities in a camp. And now for my sea trip to Masulipatam, which must form a sort of episode in the “Reminiscences.”

The *Virginia* was one of three transports ordered to the above port to bring another native regiment, the 38th, to Rangoon. She was somewhat of a tub, as sailors would say, but of 400 or 500 tons burthen, and her commander was a fat, jolly, good-tempered, hospitable fellow, many such of whom there were at that period amongst the country skippers congregated at Rangoon, fortunately for the hungry subs. who hung out at the King's Wharf, and who never got anything worthy the name of a dinner excepting upon ship-board. The captain and his two officers were the only Europeans besides myself; but we

were a cheerful party, and got on swimmingly, whilst the improved diet, the sea air, and the change of scene, soon worked a favourable change in my health. The sudden transition from commissariat rations to a diet of poultry, fresh pork in all its varieties, and Hodgson's pale ale *ad libitum*, with nothing to do when unemployed at the table but to lounge and smoke on the poop, made we look upon the *Virginia*, in those days of animal enjoyment, as a sort of floating paradise.

In this agreeable manner, and with progressive health, I had the satisfaction of finding myself on the 20th of March once more riding at anchor in the Masulipatam roads, after a lapse of nearly a twelvemonth, with all the ugly features of the place, for which it is so celebrated, full before me. Though we were scarcely anchored in more than five fathoms, the distance from the shore must have been eight or nine miles; and this, as far as the eye could reach, presented the most dreary prospect, being only a succession of sandy ridges, varied here and there by a dismal-looking clump of palmyra trees.

In due course my old acquaintance Mr. A., the master-attendant, came off to us, when I lost

no time in effecting a landing, and reporting myself to the hospitable but eccentric brigadier then commanding the garrison, and to whom I was well known. His house was ever open to all grades (of officers I mean), but especially to the destitute *sub.*, and in the present instance I was hurried off to his hospitable mansion in the Pettah, a distance of two miles, with the understanding that I was to make it my home during my sojourn at the station. It was a delightful residence, pleasantly situated in a spacious lawn, or *compound*, as we Indians call it, planted with the usual ornamental trees and shrubs of the country. Although the gallant colonel was a married man, with a family, he would ever find room for his numerous bachelor friends, even at the expense of his own convenience. At the same time with myself there were four other young officers lodging under his roof, one of whom slept in the dining-room! His house was in fact quite a Liberty Hall, the delight of all young hands; and what with the billiard-table, his good cheer, and the commandant's mirth-exciting anecdotes (familiar to most Mulls) after dinner, our time slipped away most merrily, and my health was soon so well re-instated that I was anxious to rejoin the "Lambs," without

taking the full benefit of my "sick leave;" but here was a difficulty I did not anticipate.

When calling to pay my respects, as in duty bound, upon the officer then commanding the northern division of the Madras army, Colonel H., I took the opportunity of acquainting him that, having recovered my health sooner than I expected, it was *my intention* to return to Rangoon by the same vessel that had brought me over. I was immediately given to understand, however, that such a step would not be permitted without a reference to Madras, a distance of 300 miles! They gave me credit, I believe, for my zeal; but I was not a little nettled at this unexpected check upon my movements, looking upon it as something monstrous to lay an embargo upon a man not only willing, but most eager, to rejoin his corps on active service. My object was, however, obtained through the *prescribed channel*, and permission for my return to Ava arrived from head-quarters just in time to enable me to embark in one of the vessels that were to convey the 38th Native Infantry to the seat of war.

After living a fortnight in clover at the expense of the hospitable brigadier, I once more bid adieu to Masulipatam and the comforts of

civilized life, and embarked on board the *Zenobia* transport. I had some agreeable associates on board, the officers of the 38th, seven or eight of us sharing the gun-room in common, and at this remote period I look back with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure to our evening merry-makings on the poop: I have said pain, as many of the number have long since ceased to be. Our captain, like most of his class in those days, we all voted "a good fellow," for his table overflowed with Hodgson's ale and *laul shrab*, and he treated us once or twice a-week to a ham and turkey, dishes that never fail to be *vis-à-vis* in an Eastern banquet. Our voyage was in every way a prosperous one, and I disembarked at Rangoon on the 14th of April, after an absence of only five weeks.

Here very interesting intelligence awaited us, relating to the capture of the enemy's extensive works at Denobew, on the western bank of the Irrawaddy, about ninety miles from Rangoon, and the death of their celebrated chief, Bundoolah, who was killed by the bursting of a shell from our batteries. To this accident, indeed, we were indebted for our success, which might otherwise have cost us much blood from the formidable obstacles to be overcome, the enemy, to the

number of 15,000 or 20,000 men, having evacuated Denobew during the night, after the loss of their spirited leader, whom we had been accustomed to look upon as a sort of sable Bonaparte.

The town had undergone a considerable change for the better, even during my short absence, and it was now fuller of inhabitants than probably it had ever been before, whilst the markets were abundantly supplied. I took up my quarters, in the now deserted lines of my regiment, with a brother-officer who had just arrived from Calcutta and now, like myself, was waiting for an opportunity to join the head-quarters of the corps, which, together with the 22nd M.N.I., was left to garrison the fort of Denobew. In the meantime we were gratified to hear of our army having entered Prome, a place of considerable note *en route* to Ava, and on the eastern bank of the Irrawaddy, without firing a shot.

After much tedious delay my companion and myself, on the 10th of May, had the gratification to read our names in the orderly-book as having permission to join our corps in advance. We accordingly embarked the same day at sunset, but did not get under weigh till the following morning at seven. Our little vessel was named the *Blake* gunboat, and was armed with one long

gun at her bows. She was commanded by an *experienced* midddy of the Indian Navy, then the Bombay Marine, who might, perhaps, have numbered seventeen or eighteen years, and having under his command a crew of some half-dozen lascars. Although our little vessel was partially decked, she had nothing in the shape of a cabin to shelter us from the inclemency of the monsoon, to the deluging effects of which we were exposed. I shall not readily forget the misery of my first night on board the *Blake*. The rain poured down unceasingly, and after the soaking my carcase experienced upon that occasion I only wonder how a single spark of military ardour could have escaped utter extinction. Wrapped up in my cloak, my only defence against the weather, and stretched at length upon the cold wet deck, I vainly tried to snatch a little rest, rolling to and fro with the motion of the boat, the wind, at intervals, blowing in squalls.

Though the rain was frequently heavy, especially at night, during the day we had occasional glimpses of sunshine, which enabled us to enjoy with greater zest the new scenes that our progress up the river presented. I had long and ardently looked forward to a movement in advance, and a sail on the broad bosom of the glorious Irra-

waddy; it was therefore with considerable gratification that, at seven on the following morning, I found our boat fairly under weigh and leaving Rangoon astern. On either bank of the river there was something to interest us, several spots having become celebrated as scenes of late encounters. In due time we glided past Kimmen-dine. A mile or so beyond this we entered the Panlang Creek, which branches off to the left and, uniting at Pagoda Point (once the site of some strong stockades, which were captured), with the Lyne Creek, in conjunction with it, forms below the Rangoon river. Here the stream, though deep and still rapid, was of course much narrower, and the tangled and impervious jungle that extended to the water's edge on either side sadly contracted our views of the country; still, at long intervals, extensive tracts of level open country were seen, and occasionally in the immediate vicinity of the banks a passing glimpse of an unfinished stockade, a bamboo-built village, a herd of buffalos, or a ruined pagoda. On the 12th, the day after leaving Rangoon, we dropped anchor before the stockaded town, or rather village (it was a mean-looking place) of Panlang, which we *calculated* to be not less than fifty miles from our starting-point. The water column of

the army, under General Cotton, had captured it a month or two previously, leaving in it a native corps as a garrison, whilst an armed transport, the *Satellite*, was an additional protection to the river-face, having on board a handful of our men acting as marines; such a measure was indispensable towards keeping open our communications. A little before reaching Panlang, to the right, we passed the Tantabian Creek, uniting the Panlang and Lyne rivers; whilst soon after, to the left, we were joined by the Bassien river, an offshoot of the mighty Irrawaddy, the grand artery of the country.

After leaving Panlang, which we did after a few hours' stay at midnight, our progress began to be tedious, as we were less under the influence of the tide, and in the absence of wind we had constant recourse to the laborious process of tracking. The country was still so overgrown with brushwood and long grass that we had seldom anything like a satisfactory view of the interior; the grass indeed was frequently high enough to shelter an elephant, being the jungle or reed grass, not unfrequently twelve and fourteen feet high! When tired of tracking we would pull up under the bank, and make short excursions to the neighbouring villages, gun in hand; we were seldom

successful in shooting, game being scarce, but at times we were fortunate enough to get a few fowls from the villagers, which were invariably fairly paid for. Our nights were anything but agreeable, owing to the mosquitoes, which lie in wait for the voyager in countless myriads amongst the neighbouring rushes, &c. The blood of a white man is a dainty they highly prize, and the fresher the article is, the more greedy is their demand for it; so that the latest arrivals from Europe, especially if they are young and tender, are ever desperately attacked by these blood-suckers. It is sometimes no easy matter to recognise on the following morning an unfortunate being who has been exposed during the night, without the protection of curtains, to their attacks.

On the sixth day from quitting Rangoon we reached the village of Yanganchaingah, at the junction of the Panlang Creek with the Irrawaddy, which noble river we now entered. The first view of it was very striking, it being here at least a mile wide, while such an expanse of water contrasted favourably with the comparatively narrow channel in which we had previously been confined. When fairly afloat on the Irrawaddy, we might have fancied ourselves almost at sea, so much did our boat feel the influence of such a

volume of water, and this effect was much increased by one of the most violent squalls of wind and rain I ever remember before to have experienced either ashore or afloat. We had ascended the stream for about seven miles, with a fresh breeze from the south-west, when it came on to blow with such violence that we were all but capsized. Our frail bark was driven by the storm amongst some lofty rushes, close under the right bank, from which, when the storm had subsided, we had some difficulty in extricating ourselves. We got under weigh for the last time at daybreak, on the 16th, and as the sun rose we caught a distant view of the white pagoda of Denobew, before which we anchored in the course of the afternoon, passing two large islands, one to the right and the other to the left, and after tracking the boat for about fifteen miles. Some of our brother-officers were on the lookout for us at the landing-place, and the rejoining our social mess (for it had been re-established since the market had been better supplied) was in every way a gratifying circumstance, and it was with a genuine feeling of pride and pleasure that I looked once more upon the honoured, though alas! faded, uniform of my old corps. I found the officers for the most part located in a

large house, which had formerly been the residence of Bundoolah, and a corner in it had been reserved for me. It was a remarkable building, of immense size, and constructed entirely of bamboo, after the most approved fashion, the floor being made of the same material, split. It was well raised from the ground upon posts, and contained numerous small apartments, opening into corridors, whilst there was one very large room, extending the whole length of the building, which had been set apart as a mess-room. Altogether we considered it a very comfortable abode, and as we pulled well together I can look back with considerable pleasure to the days I passed in "Bundoolah's house," albeit many of our habits were then necessarily somewhat uncivilized. The house was a frail affair, having been run up hastily for the accommodation of the Burman general, and parts of it bore traces of the passage of our round shot.

The fort or stockade of Denobew in which the above was situated was a work of such extent and importance as to demand a special notice. It stood on the left or western bank of the Irrawaddy, in shape nearly an oblong square, of 1000 yards long by 500 broad, the ground on which it stood and in its vicinity being quite level and open. The

stockade or wooden wall of the place was formed of teak timber, of considerable thickness, firmly planted in the ruins of the old brick wall that had formerly been a fort of some celebrity. It had flank defences in the shape of equidistant square bastions, having embrasures for cannon and being looped for musketry, whilst the entrances, six in number, were defended by ravelins or demilunes—a circumstance, by the way, shewing a degree of military science we were wholly unprepared for. But the really formidable part of these works consisted in the deep ditch and abattis by which it was surrounded. It was calculated that bar shot would have removed this latter obstacle, but there was little doubt at the time that, had an assault been necessary, the passage of the abattis would have exposed us to heavy loss. Upon the ramparts were mounted 150 pieces of cannon and 250 jirgals, and the fort was garrisoned by 15,000 or 20,000 men, a considerable portion of whom were musketeers. The river-face was remarkably strong, mounting fifty pieces of cannon, and was further strengthened by seventeen war-boats, each carrying from fifty to eighty men and a heavy piece of ordnance. Distinct from the principal work, though adding to its strength, was a chain of small re-

doubts, defending a creek, about 500 yards distant, on the same side of the river; and further on, at an equal distance, and on another creek, was a strongly fortified pagoda, defended by a thousand men. These works caused us much loss of life, and before the former we met with a decided repulse, to which I shall presently refer. On the river-face of the stockade there was an object of considerable interest in a large fortified tree, which the ingenuity of our foes had turned to good account. It stood in the line of works like a giant, and being a banian tree of immense bulk, and the branches being lopped off, four small cannon were mounted upon it on three platforms, one overtopping the other, the upper one being sheltered by a roof, and access to them being by means of ladders. This very singular battery, being very elevated, commanded a fine view of the river and surrounding country, and when in peaceable possession of the place I have often passed an hour on the tree with my book. So much for the defences of Denobew; its interior, though extensive, was most uninteresting, consisting as it did of fragile ranges of huts, separated by swampy tracts, with here and there an antiquated and neglected pagoda.

But we must now take a cursory survey of the

operations that preceded and led to our occupation of Denobew.

It will be remembered how the army advanced into the interior in two columns, one by land and the other by water. The land column pushed on rapidly, without encountering any obstacles; but the water column, under Général Cotton, had soon abundant employment, for a few days after capturing Panlang they found themselves, on the 4th of March, before the formidable works of Denobew. General Cotton had with him 800 Europeans, comprising H.M.'s 47th, 89th and the Madras European Regt., and a weak battalion of the Madras Native Infantry, whilst the flotilla mounted from fifty to sixty heavy guns—a powerful battery, certainly; but the detachment was too weak in numbers to overcome all the obstacles opposed to it, though one gallant exploit it did achieve, in the attack and capture of the White Pagoda stockade, before spoken of as forming the first outwork of the main stockade, from which it might have been distant a thousand yards or thereabouts. This place was carried on the morning of the 7th of March, by 600 men formed into three columns. The garrison, a thousand strong, all picked men, made a most determined resistance; but nothing could withstand

the ardour of our troops, who soon effected an entrance, and the Madras European Regiment was said, upon that occasion, to have greatly distinguished itself. The general's arrangements were so judicious that the enemy were completely surrounded, and their loss was estimated at not less than 500 men killed and wounded, whilst ours was trifling in comparison. Upon this day there was terrific havoc with the bayonet, the combatants being crowded into a very narrow space.

General Cotton's plan was to attack each work in succession; with this view, immediately after the capture of the White Pagoda, 200 men of the 89th and Madras European Regiment, under Lieut. Col. Mallet, were detached to attack the second work, under cover of our guns; but the enemy were here in immense force, and the attempt was a complete failure, one-half of our men having fallen ere they could reach the works, and two valuable officers of H.M. 89th, Captains Rose and Cannon, having been killed. Having thus been completely foiled by an outwork, it was perfectly clear that nothing could be attempted against the main stockade; the troops were therefore all re-embarked the same night,

after experiencing the heavy loss of five officers and 130 men killed and wounded. Intelligence of our defeat was forthwith communicated to Sir A. Campbell, who, it was calculated, could not be far distant, though on the opposite bank of the river, which was now rapid and broad. On hearing of the failure Sir Archibald countermarched his column, which was much in advance, and after making incredible exertions in crossing a mighty river with very inefficient means, one of the most delicate and difficult operations in war, he appeared before Denobew on the morning of the 25th of March. The land and water-columns were now united, and the fort was invested in due form, the operations being occasionally interrupted by some vigorous though unsuccessful sorties on the part of the enemy. Upon these occasions they brought cavalry and many elephants into action, which were charged with the greatest gallantry by the body-guard, under Capt. Sneyd, the best specimen of native cavalry I ever saw in India. Our small army could do but little more than watch one face of this extensive fort; but we were strong in artillery, and, a breach having been effected, the assault was to have been made on the morning of the 2nd of April. At day-

break, however, it was discovered that the enemy had evacuated the fort during the night, Bundoolah's death, by a fragment of a shell on the same evening, having quite dispirited them. Thus easily fell Denobew into our hands, placing in our possession 150 pieces of cannon, 250 jingals, 40 war-boats, besides large magazines of grain and ammunition; 300 of their wounded men were also left in the rear, of whom every proper care was taken. The enemy's loss during the siege was about 800 men, whilst ours, including the failure on the 7th of March, amounted to seven officers and 230 men killed and wounded. As it was, we had good cause to congratulate ourselves on such an easy conquest, for, had the assault been made, owing to the serious obstacles offered by the deep ditch and abattis, our loss would doubtless have been very heavy. How the numerous garrison, not less than 15,000 men, together with elephants, cavalry, &c., could have so completely escaped our vigilance, has always appeared to me most marvellous; but elude us they did most cleverly, and that not for the first time. In the morning there were no traces of the fugitives, and with our mere handful of cavalry, it was not considered prudent to go in pursuit of them, though, had we been provided

with the means, their destruction would have been inevitable.*

This affair being over, the combined troops moved once more in advance on the 4th of April, leaving, as before stated, the Madras European Regiment and 22nd M.N.I. to garrison Denobew, its occupation being considered necessary to secure the safe navigation of the river. To be thus left in the rear but ill-accorded with the gallant spirit of the "Lambs," and the effects of their disappointment had scarcely subsided at the period I rejoined them.

I was nearly four months at Denobew, during which time the monsoon was at its height, and the confinement to the house consequent upon it was excessively irksome; the place, however, being a central point between Prome and Rangoon, few days elapsed without receiving a visit from some of our friends afloat, whom we entertained at our mess, which was now very creditably supplied.

* It was during the operations before Denobew that an accident occurred to the present General Godwin, then Lieut.-Col., commanding her Majesty's 41st, one of the best officers employed in the first Ava war. On the arrival of the 41st Regiment before Denobew, when the troops were resting and the arms piled, the Colonel's horse shied amongst them and a bayonet ran into the sole of his foot, inflicting a severe wound. Nevertheless, when the enemy made their sally upon the lines, on the same night, he was the first on the ground with his regiment.

At times we made excursions to the neighbouring villages in search of ducks, fowls, &c., and on several occasions in company with my valued friend B——, of the 22nd, I enjoyed some good snipe-shooting on the bank of the Irrawaddy, on the first day of the season killing eight snipes successively out of ten shots. Quail and wild fowl were to be met with, but not in any quantity. Whilst on the subject of shooting, I must not here omit to record a remarkable shot, as to numbers, I made whilst at Denobew. The beautiful little bird, the *avadavat*, was here in large flocks, feeding on the heaps of paddy that were lying about, and on one occasion I killed eighty-four with a common load of snipe-shot! and subsequently often killed forty or fifty at a shot. This may sound like a *traveller's* story to the ears of those whose knowledge in such matters is limited to the scanty numbers of our less prolific clime, but it is, nevertheless, perfectly true, as many could certify.

An interesting event occurred to me whilst in garrison at Denobew, being no less than my promotion to a lieutenantancy, by the death of a senior. He, poor fellow, had been severely wounded some months previously at the Dalla Creek stockades, and latterly, having been attacked with dysentery,

I found him hurrying to the grave at the period of my arrival at head-quarters. A young ensign, of more than three years' standing, upon such an occasion hardly knows how to behave, for while he cannot but be affected by the loss of a comrade, the sweets of promotion and an increased pay—abstract tend much to neutralize such a feeling, and there is a conflict between sorrow and selfishness not very creditable to human nature. Poor G—— was wasted to a skeleton when I joined, and did not keep me waiting many days more for my lieutenancy; he died under the same roof that sheltered all his brother-officers, and we consigned him to a humid grave (the ground being a complete swamp) within a few yards of Bundoolah's house, with military honours.

And we thought as we hallowed his lowly bed,
And smoothed down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,
And we far away on the billow.

On the day following the funeral, his scanty wardrobe and war-worn military accoutrements, one of the most affecting circumstances connected with service in the field, were distributed by auction at the hands of the sergeant-major.

As the monsoon was drawing to a close, we began to be very anxious as to our destination,

knowing full well that the post would be vacated on the advance of the army from Prome, where they had passed the wet season. We had fondly calculated upon our order to join it, and to partake in the honours of a movement on the capital; but, early in September, our hopes were all frustrated, and an order arrived for us to fall back upon Rangoon, and from thence join the Pegue field force then assembling under Colonel Pepper for an advance upon Tongho, a strong point about 100 miles eastward of Prome, on the Sittang river, where the enemy were said to be in great force. We were still to take the field, it is true, but we should much have preferred being attached to the main column; our lot probably was decided by the circumstance of our being the junior European Regiment, as well as of our reduced numbers, not exceeding 250 men.

On the 5th of September, my natal day, I embarked once more for Rangoon in a Burman canoe, with friend C—— and eighty men (not all, however, in one boat); and on the 9th the whole corps was snugly established at the base of old Shoe Dagon. On its eastern face is a most exquisite building, constructed with a great deal of elegance and taste; it contained in the centre a colossal image of Guadma in a wire cage, and

the whole of the interior, including the ceiling and several lofty pillars, was brilliantly gilded. This was called the "Golden Temple," and I well remember when it fell to the lot of myself and two other brother officers to take up our quarters beneath its beautiful roof, how unceremoniously we treated the presiding deity, by placing an oil-lamp to burn upon Gaudma's nose! During the time we were located at this place, we had some capital snipe-shooting, the season being at its height. Our shooting ground was on low swampy spots, amidst the old entrenchments, being the battle-field of the preceding year, when Majors Walker and Sale so gallantly defeated the enemy in their trenches; and now, whilst quietly bagging our snipes, of which I frequently killed eight or ten brace, we fell in with relics of that hard day's work in scattered bones, fragments of accoutrements, grape-shot, &c. &c. Whilst on the subject of snipe-shooting, one of the most fascinating of Eastern field-sports, I must here mention that snipes are so common during the wet season in the vicinity of Rangoon that I have literally shot them from my window!

It was at this period that I was silly enough to undergo the process of being tattooed, after the

fashion of the Burmese—not, however, to the same extent, though several of my acquaintance underwent the operation in full. I merely wished to carry about me some lasting memorial of service in Ava, and was satisfied with the figure of an elephant upon one arm and a tiger upon the other, and though sixteen or seventeen years have now elapsed since they were imprinted, the marks are as fresh as ever. The operation is excessively painful, and is performed by two men, the science of tattooing being quite a profession. One man holds the arm down tight and compresses the skin, whilst the other first traces the outline of the figure to be tattooed in ink, and then describes it by a succession of deep punctures with a sharp-pointed iron instrument dipped in ink, the top of it being laden with lead. A genuine Burman is tattooed from the waist to the knee, the infliction, for so in truth it may be called, being strictly enjoined by his religion.

Whilst the Madras European Regiment garrisoned the Shoe Dagon, an awkward event occurred in connection with the corps, which at first promised very serious consequences. Another officer and myself, with a detachment of the corps, were on duty in the town of Rangoon, when, one day, having returned early from a

shooting excursion, we found every one in a state of excitement, and were not a little startled to hear that the "Lambs" were in open mutiny! I could not on the moment learn any particulars, but felt satisfied the gallant corps was belied, no symptom of disaffection having previously been discernible, and truly there was no ground for any. The regiment was hastily ordered to parade for inspection by Colonel S——, then governor of Rangoon, and my detachment was ordered up from the town, distant two miles and a half, which I thought anything but agreeable, after a fatiguing day's shooting in the sun. The most exaggerated reports were current relative to the state of the corps, and some fearing it might carry the stockade at the point of the bayonet, were for making a display of artillery on our flank! Under these circumstances, what was our surprise, on reaching the parade-ground, to find the regiment drawn up in hollow square, facing inwards—all in full dress, of course—and the unusual stillness and order that prevailed through the ranks bespeaking anything but mutiny and disaffection! I had hitherto been wholly ignorant of all that had been going on, but a few words from a brother officer soon explained everything. A letter, it appeared, had

been addressed to the governor of Rangoon, signed "*The Madras European Regiment*," couched in very unbecoming language, and making all kinds of groundless complaints against the officers of the corps, from the colonel downwards. That the letter existed there was no denying, but none of us for a moment believed it to be the voice of the regiment; and the result proved us to be right. In due time up galloped Colonel S—— and his staff, and, the letter having been read aloud before all the men, he made them a suitable address, after which, calling to the front two or three non-commissioned officers and men from each company, he asked them if they had any complaints to make, when they replied unanimously that they had none whatever, and denied all knowledge of the mutinous letter or its writer. The matter was of course well sifted, and it was traced at last to an ill-conditioned fellow, who had been once an attorney's clerk in England. This man had concocted and written the letter, countenanced, perhaps, by some three or four malcontents; but he paid dearly for his misconduct, for he was tried by a court-martial and received 400 lashes in full, and so much had he disgusted his comrades that, to

avoid their reproaches, he was soon removed, at his own particular request, to another corps.

Shortly after the occurrence of this little event, at the latter end of October, 1825, we once more embarked for ancient Pegue, to join Colonel Pepper's column and gather laurels on the road to Tongho.

CHAP. XII.

CAPTURE OF SITTANG IN PEGUE.

Though no brilliant and decisive battles graced our campaigns in Ava, there was an abundance of desultory fighting throughout the war, enough to satisfy the veriest fire-eater, and on many occasions did the severe loss sustained by small bodies of British troops prove how well they sustained their character when opposed to formidable masses of barbarians, with no eye save that of their comrades to admire, and no pen save that of their commander, in his formal despatch, to chronicle and extol their deeds. They were content to do their duty ; be mine the pleasing task to snatch from oblivion, at all events, one of those "*petites affaires*." The capture of Sittang, though an event of much moment to all engaged in the

affair, strange to say, never excited any great interest in India, or even in the army in Ava, by a detachment of which the exploit was achieved, and this indifference must be attributed, in the first instance, to the obscurity of the place, and in the second to the affair having been consummated by *Company's troops alone*; otherwise this most dashing affair would never have been slurred over as it has been.

In December, 1825, it was my good fortune to be attached to the column of troops operating in Pegue, commanded by one of the bravest officers that ever served the company—the late Colonel Pepper. We mustered about 2,000 men, all infantry, and a few European artillery, with two 6-pounders, two 5½ inch, and two camel howitzers. Of cavalry we had none, for the nature of the country was unsuited to that arm; indeed, during the whole war, the only mounted troops ever brought into action were the Governor-General's body-guard and the horse artillery, and the former was speedily dismounted by an epidemic amongst their horses. Of the aforesaid two thousand men, about 250 only were Europeans (the wreck of the 1st Madras European regiment and the artillery); the remainder was composed of the 3rd and 34th Light Infantry,

and a wing of the 12th M.N.I. It was altogether a compact and efficient little force, with a promising field before them, but a woeful paucity of experienced officers, the mainspring of all military operations in the East. This defect, however, we were too well habituated to, and the failures, which certainly did sometimes occur in Ava, when our native troops were sent to cope singly with an unaccustomed enemy, were mainly attributable to that cruel and short-sighted economy which affords the Indian army such an inadequate allowance of officers.

The object of assembling this force (or column, as we called it,) in Pegue, was, as well as I could understand, for the double purpose of covering our position at Rangoon, and ultimately of pushing on to Shoeghein and Tongho, and thus operating on a parallel line with the grand army under Sir A. Campbell, which was advancing on the capital by the banks of the Irrawaddy. The distance from Rangoon to Pegue by water is about eighty miles, in a N.N.E. direction. The country on either side of the river is flat and tolerably free from jungle; but only patches in the immediate vicinity of the river and creeks were cultivated. Occasionally low swampy jungle extended for miles by the river side, affording

good shelter to alligators, which abound in these parts, where they attain a monstrous size, and peculiarly favourable to the production and growth of that most detestable of all the insect tribe, musquitoes.

About the latter end of December, 1825, our column, to the joy of all concerned, bid adieu to the ruined walls of ancient Pegue and its splendid pagoda (Shoe-madoo Prau), where we left a garrison of three hundred men, and after traversing about seventy miles of alternate swamp and jungle, in a N.N.E. direction, we reached the large stockaded town of Shoeghein, pleasantly situated on a bend of the Sittang river, which here is about two hundred yards broad, very rapid, but generally shallow. For the first thirty miles from Pegue we marched over an extensive plain, abounding in marsh and dotted here and there with clumps of umbrageous trees and mud villages. Antelopes swarmed, but other game was scarce. At the village of Meekoo, where the road crossed the river, this plain terminated, and on the opposite side the face of the country was of a totally different character, being a dense mass of forest (mostly teak), the road to Shoeghein running nearly parallel with the river, and having on its right, as far as eye could reach,

lofty teak-clad mountains. The distance from Meekoo to Shoeghein was forty miles ; but, though the nature of the country, thickly clothed with jungle and intersected by ravines, afforded every facility to an enterprising enemy for harassing our line of march, the Burmese contented themselves with merely sending a party of a hundred men to watch our movements, who, skirmishing occasionally with our advance, had simply the good effect of keeping us on the *qui vive*, for I do not remember we sustained any loss.

As we drew near Shoeghein we fell in with a strongly stockaded position on an abrupt eminence to our right, completely commanding the road ; and here we certainly did expect that our copper-coloured foes would show fight, for well do I recall the excitement that trifling circumstance produced in our little force. The road was tolerably good, but was entirely enveloped in jungle, or reed grass, ten feet high. The European regiment, to which I was attached, headed the column, as Europeans always do in Anglo-Indian warfare, and with the advance-guard were the brigadier and staff, and the 6-pounders. Suddenly the "halt" is sounded—a buzz runs through the ranks—the band are (much against their will)

ordered to the rear. A pause ensues, whilst through the still ranks of the column guesses are rife as to the cause of the detention. Every man, however, prepares for action. A few musket-shots are heard on the right, in the dense mass of jungle ; bang ! bang ! go the 6-pounders in our front. Another pause ensues : soon after the 'advance' is again sounded ; the column creeps on—for columns on a line of march always creep—encumbered as they are with guns in front and baggage in the rear, and, winding along at the foot of an abrupt eminence, a stockade is soon discernible on the partially-cleared summit to the right, where a straggling soldier or two indicated peaceable possession, for it was soon evident that the enemy had deserted it on the approach of our advanced guard, leaving two pieces of cannon in our hands. We destroyed the place as effectually as our limited time and means would allow, bivouacked there during the night, and on the following day pushed on to Shoeghein, a distance of eleven miles, the road much as before, the enemy narrowly watching our movements and skirmishing with us as we advanced, or 'sniping' at us. But as my main object just now is to get at Sittang, if indeed the numberless interesting, though trivial, incidents connected with our pro-

gress to Shoegein, which rush in upon my mind, in all their freshness, will admit of my doing so, I must push on "*per saxa, per ignes.*"

Shoeghein, a large and strongly stockaded town, was vacated as we approached, not only by the enemy, but by all its living inmates except the pigs, who mustered strong, and upon whom a hot and desultory fire was kept up for some time, to the imminent risk of all concerned; but pork of any kind was by no means despicable in those hard times, though its feeding might have been none of the cleanest, and well do I remember the hearty supper I made that night upon this same pork. The pigs were soon subdued, and we were left in peaceable possession of Shoeghein and a "beggarly account of empty houses," on the 3rd of January, 1826. We had not, however, been long in the enjoyment of our *El Dorado* (for so we had long considered this town), when rumours were afloat that a portion of the force (the 3rd L.I. 500 strong, with pioneers and scaling-ladders) were to make a retrograde movement, for the purpose of taking military possession of a fortified village named Sittang, on the left bank of the river of the same name, about fifty miles south of Shoeghein, and fifteen miles below the

village of Meekoo, where the force had crossed the stream on its advance. Previous to quitting Pegue, rumours had reached us of its strength, and we naturally calculated upon an excursion in that direction ; but, for reasons best known to himself, our brigadier was satisfied with turning the position, though to attack it we had only to diverge fifteen miles from our true line of march. On possessing ourselves of Shoeghein, however, matters were changed, and something or other transpired to determine our chief to occupy the place forthwith. That there should have been any indecision in the case seemed strange, when we considered how liable our communication with Pegue was to interruption from an active enemy possessed of the post. The movement, however, was decided upon, and the detachment was despatched under the command of Colonel Conry, one of the best and bravest soldiers that ever graced the ranks of the Madras army. The Pegue column was, indeed, fortunate in having two such officers as Pepper and Conry attached to it. A handful of Europeans was offered him as an auxiliary ; but so fully and nobly did the gallant officer confide in his tried sepoys that he rejected the offer at once. It must be observed that the prevalent opinion was that Sittang was

unprepared to make any opposition, being, as we understood, unoccupied by a hostile party and well-disposed towards us.

The detachment moved long before daybreak on the 6th January, and well do I remember the pleasing effect produced by their band (they had a very good one) as they marched through the stockade to the point of embarkation, passing immediately under the windows of my bamboo tenement. I was startled from my slumbers by the lively strains of "Over the hills and far away," that favourite air of marching regiments in a foreign land. The night was still and dark, and all the occupants of Shoeghein were buried in repose, except such as were connected with the detachment getting under arms. I heard nothing till fairly startled by the thrilling melody close to me, accompanied by the heavy well-timed tramp of a body of military. The union of these sounds is highly exciting to a soldier's spirit, and never was I more sensible of its effect than on the night in question. Midnight music is at all times peculiarly fascinating to me; but it was doubly so in the present instance, when, amid the stillness of a camp, in a far and savage land, our national military strains broke in upon my slumbers, announcing that a

gallant band was on its march against a barbarous foe.

When the detachment had left us, so fully persuaded were we that they would succeed in their object, to which none of us attached much importance, that, after their departure, we thought very little more about them. On the 9th, however, only three or four days after, we heard, to our astonishment, of the disastrous failure of the expedition. It appeared the detachment reached the place on the 7th, and attacked it immediately. The cautious but determined foe reserved their fire (a most unusual case in Burman warfare), and kept a profound silence, till our troops were within twenty or thirty yards of their "wooden walls." Our people were thus lulled into security, and, seeing no signs of life, much less of opposition, for not a shot had been fired, they made up their minds to a peaceful occupation of a deserted place. Their copper-coloured opponents, however, no sooner found our troops fairly within their grasp, than they opened a very heavy fire of musketry and jingals, (a small portable cannon worked on swivels), which told severely. By the exertions of the very few European officers present with the corps (not more than seven or eight to 500 men), the summit was attained and

the ladders planted; but the troops were not destined to see the inside of Sittang upon this occasion, for though some of the officers actually mounted the ladders, the sepoys were thrown into such disorder by the suddenness of the attack, and the heavy loss they early sustained, especially in the death of their gallant commandant, Col. Conry, who was shot dead whilst in the act of firing through a loop-hole with one of his men's fusils, that nothing could induce them to follow their leaders into this lion's den. Confusion soon ensued, and then a "*sauve qui peut*" sort of retreat to the boats, which had been left under a guard of fifty men at a short distance. They were not pursued by the enemy, and fell back on Meekoo, fifteen miles up the stream, communicating the intelligence forthwith to Shoeghein.

Upon this occasion the regiment lost Colonel Corry, Lieutenant Adams, and ten men killed, whilst Lieutenants Harvey and Power, and several rank and file were wounded—losses which reduced the number of officers present for duty to three, and gave the temporary command of the corps to a lieutenant! Not a captain was present, neither do I remember to have seen a captain with the corps during the time it was attached to the force. And yet this was a light infantry regiment on field service!

No sooner had the official account of the disaster reached us than prompt measures were taken to retrieve our lost honour. It was my lot, and a proud and happy lot I then, in the buoyancy and recklessness of youth, considered it, to be attached to the Grenadier company of the 1st Madras European regiment—a company that any soldier might have been proud of—and well we knew that, by the morrow's dawn, many of us would be *en route* to reinforce the detachment at Meekoo. We were not deceived: that day's orders detailed who were to partake in the honour of a second attack upon this redoubtable stockade, for so even the boldest began now to consider it, after the unlooked-for opposition it had made to the efforts of the 3rd Light Infantry, a corps of acknowledged character in the coast army.

On the morning of the 9th, our gallant brigadier, who had long been burning with a desire to distinguish himself, accompanied by his staff, and taking a six-pounder and a camel howitzer under Capt. Dickenson, of the Madras artillery, embarked in canoes to proceed by water to Meekoo. The flank companies of the 1st M.E. Regt., mustering only 75 rank and file (these were a sort of “elegant extracts,” for at the commencement of the war they were more than 200 strong),

100 of the 12th, and 180 of the 34th N.I., in all 355 rank and file, marched early the same morning for a similar destination, being by land about forty miles distant. The road was good, and ran through a dense forest, which afforded a most grateful shelter from the sun's rays, so much so as to render tents hardly necessary during the day; at night, however, it is indispensable to be under cover in such localities, for the damp night air of a tropical forest can seldom be braved with impunity: at such an hour deadly fevers lurk beneath the inviting and umbrageous foliage. In two marches of twenty miles per day we cleared the forest, crossed the Sittang river, and once more found ourselves at Meekoo, amongst our old friends of the 3rd L.I. The water party had arrived just before us.

Well do I recollect the cordiality with which we were greeted, and the hospitable meal that awaited us. The sight of our veteran flankers was reviving to the drooping spirits of our comrades of the native infantry, who now readily acknowledged the value of a handful of British soldiers at the head of an attacking column, though, a few days previous, they ridiculed the idea of the Palamcottah Light Infantry, or *Palamcots*, as our men called them, requiring

any such example. A second attack they knew was to be made forthwith, and they gladly welcomed us to share the danger as well as glory of the undertaking. Whilst, however, our friends were re-assured by our prompt appearance, some amongst them evidently had their misgivings as to our success in the enterprise. Startling accounts now poured in upon us of the formidable obstacles that would oppose our progress, and, whether as regarded its position, or the band by which it was so ably garrisoned—its height, its strength, in short, all its means of defence, both natural and physical—it was decided to be the strongest stockade that had yet been attacked by the British arms in Ava.

I must not omit here to state that, upon the morning of our arrival at Meekoo the brigadier had received despatches from the head-quarters of the army at Melloon, intimating that an armistice had been agreed upon, and of course interdicting any further operations during its continuance; this, however, by no means suited the present plans or the temperament of our gallant commander, who very quietly put the letter into his pocket, with a firm resolve to have a slap at Sittang "*coute qui coute*." It was a bold stroke certainly, though somewhat irregular; and it

was this probably that caused less publicity to be given to the capture of the place than it deserved.

During the day I paid a visit to one of the officers who had been wounded at the failure, and I shall not readily forget the spectacle the poor fellow presented, and the agonies he endured. His wound was of the most serious nature, and whilst he writhed and groaned in his bed he repeatedly entreated us to put an end to him. It was a most painful scene, but one that must sometimes occur amongst soldiers in the field. This officer, however, partially recovered from his wound, but, being disabled for further duty, retired on a pension. While at Meekoo we lengthened our scaling ladders, so as to be prepared for any difficulties on this score, and every arrangement was made for the embarkation of 500 men at 2 A.M. on the following morning, for at this hour the tide served, and, moreover, darkness would conceal the movement from the enemy's scouts. In addition to the party previously detailed as having come from Shoegein, we were now joined by the headquarters and about 160 rank and file of the 3rd L.I. Our humble encampment of some few tents, to shelter us from the night air, was close to the river Sittang, a sufficient number of

canoes, manned by friendly natives, being drawn up on its banks, ready to receive us on the morrow.

It is now fifteen years since five brother officers and myself (I speak of my own party) partook of our social but frugal meal upon that memorable evening. The gallant captain who commanded our flank companies had a solitary pint of port wine, which he expressly opened in honour of the occasion, and the "Fall of Sit-tang" was given and drunk with due honours. That it would fall, in spite of the obstacles that threatened to impede our efforts, none of us for a moment doubted; but it would sometimes very naturally occur to us that some of our number might fall with it, for glory must be paid for; and this reflection, *malgré* all our attempts to stifle it, had the effect of sobering, while it did not damp, our ardour, and threw a pensive, but by no means melancholy, shade over that social hour, which is very vividly retained in my memory. And here I wish I could say that this feeling partook in any degree of a religious character, such being the most appropriate under like circumstances. Nevertheless, I slept soundly that night, for there is no better soporific than a good morning's march in a tropical climate; nor do I

remember, boasting apart, that the prospect of attacking a stockade in the morning ever in the least disturbed my night's repose. We took things just as they happened to come, stockades included, and the excitement of the mode of warfare that prevailed, had for us, thoughtless youngsters, (I was then only nineteen,) something very fascinating and refreshing, especially after the dull monotony of a cantonment or garrison life in India, with its endless routine of drills, courts-martial and committees. Our rest that night, though *sweet*, was but *short*, for the stirring sound of the bugle

Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;

and by one or two A.M. we found ourselves snugly packed in the canoes, and gliding down the stream towards Sittang, leaving behind us the glimmering lights of Meekoo, whence, with straining eyes, many an anxious and no less envious comrade watched our departure.

The morning, or rather night, was extremely foggy, and very cold for the tropics, for in these parts the temperature of the atmosphere is much lower than in similar latitudes in India, being acted upon by local causes. This night-work is very trying to the animal man, particularly to the soldier, who is not unfrequently roused from

his pallet, and pleasing dreams of his dear and distant home, by the discordant yell of a savage foe, and the peal, or perhaps the *shot*—it may be the *death-shot*—of the musket! For I have known many instances during the Burmese war of a man being thus killed in sleep :

Ere his very thought could pray,
Unanneal'd he passed away!

Now, though we were not absolutely roused from our slumbers by the din of musketry or the yells of Burmans, our mind's eye could take in a tolerably clear view of all these delights in perspective, for our lives were passed in such a state of glorious uncertainty that we never knew what a day or night might bring forth. At the early hour that saw us afloat, we were all damp and drowsy, and not much disposed for conversation. I remember, however, that a few words of encouragement were addressed by our gallant leader to the men of the company, relative to the duties which were soon in all probability to devolve upon them, and to this they all heartily responded. Neither were coffee (for we managed to kindle a fire in our canoes) and cigars wanting to cheer us on our way. Time and tide, however, were both rolling on, and bearing us rapidly down the river. Day dawned, but, owing to the

thick fog in which all nature was enveloped, the sun had risen far above the horizon before it became visible. Now, however, we were all on the *qui vive*, and every eye was strained to pierce the cloud in which we had so long been shrouded; at length, through the potency of the sun's rays, the veil was partially lifted, and about a mile right a-head of us, on the left bank, the *stockade of Sittang* frowned defiance upon the river and surrounding country.

The picture that now presented itself was highly striking and characteristic. Our gallant little flotilla, carrying 500 men, was gliding down the stream in compact order. The course of the stream was due south, and its breadth perhaps 400 or 500 yards. On the right bank, the face of the country was level and bare, but on the left it was much undulated, and broken by rocky ridges, running down to the water's edge, and for the most part thickly clothed with forest; whilst the eastern distance was bounded by the lofty but craggy peaks of the Martaban range. The elevation of the place we were approaching was considerable, and it certainly had a formidable appearance, as the gilt *chattahs* or umbrellas of the chiefs, the gilded spires of the pagodas, and the arms of the Burman soldiery, glittered in the

sun's rays. From the quarter we approached, it seemed to be an elevated ridge, with a very abrupt and rocky ascent, resting on the river, on which it looked down from an almost perpendicular height of 100 or 200 feet. Its northern face, which now fronted us, formed a line at right angles with the river, and, ugly as it looked, it promised easier access than the other faces, which were shrouded in jungle. Describing it in short as a military position, I should say it was a strongly-stockaded height, with its right and rear protected by a dense and impracticable jungle, its left resting on the river Sittang, and having its front protected by a deep creek, only fordable at low water, at about musket-shot distance, while it was further strengthened by the steep and rugged nature of the intervening ground. Beyond this creek was a bare plain of some extent.

On disembarking, a most revolting and distressing spectacle appeared. The naked and mangled bodies of our comrades who fell in the first assault were suspended by the heels on gibbets along the river's bank! They were horribly disfigured by exposure to the scorching sun, and crows and vultures were greedily revelling upon them. It was at once a frightful and a melan-

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choly scene; but, instead of intimidating our people, it had only the effect of inciting a spirit of vengeance against the barbarous perpetrators, which, however unjustifiable, is but too natural in such cases.

When landed, we formed up in column, and, leaving a detachment of fifty men for the protection of the boats, advanced with our two guns to within 500 yards of the place on the plain before alluded to. Here we piled arms and looked about us. On reconnoitring, it was discovered that the creek which ran at the foot of the position, and within musket-shot of it, would not be fordable till two P.M., being within the influence of the tide, so that from eight in the morning until that hour we had abundance of leisure for making ourselves acquainted with the bold features of the place, of the front of which we had now an admirable view. We amused ourselves as well as we could, eagerly watching the effect of the artillery, as they fired away their shell and shrapnell, "*pour passer le temps.*" To this mode of salutation the Burmans replied occasionally by a sulky shot from a jingal, but without hitting their mark. The day was unusually hot, and I never remember to have had a more thorough grilling, for shelter there was none, neither tent, tree, nor shrub; and our little band, in their scarlet cloth-

ing, as they lay stretched in groups on the bare and parched plain, presented a most tempting mark for the sun's rays.

During these tedious but no less anxious hours the brigadier and staff were not idle ; points of attack were decided upon, and columns formed. At length, about half-past two P.M., the creek being reported fordable, we moved off to the assault in the following order:—The left column, under Capt. Cursham, 1st Madras European Regiment, consisting of his own company, the Grenadiers, 45 rank and file, and 160 of the 3rd Light Infantry. The centre, under Capt. Stedman, 34th L.I., our light company, 30 rank and file, and 160 of the 34th Light Infantry, and the right column, under Major Home, of the 12th Native Infantry, consisting merely of eighty or ninety of his own men. Each party was supplied with two scaling ladders, carried by pioneers. The left column, in which my lot was cast, was accompanied by Colonel Pepper. This was destined to surprise the enemy's right face by a long *détour* to the left, through some dense jungle, which effectually concealed the stockade from view, and which was here only approachable by a narrow winding path, much overgrown with brushwood. The column, on issuing from the jungle, which reached to within sixty or eighty yards of the

position, was to dash at and escalate it ; whilst the centre column, by a simultaneous movement, was to effect an entrance in the centre face, about 200 yards or so to our right. The small column on the right was to attack the enemy's left, but, being weak in numbers, its main duty, I conceive, was to distract the enemy's attention, thereby making a diversion in our favour. The signal for a simultaneous advance was to be made by sound of bugle from the left column of attack. The enemy had only fired an occasional shot at us in the early part of the day, in reply to our artillery ; but latterly they had preserved a profound silence, and not a symptom of life was now indicated in their works, either by sound or movement.

The nervous moment was now fast approaching when we were to measure our strength with the foe. The columns moved off in a fine and determined spirit for their respective points, and were soon breast-high in water, fording the creek that separated them from Sittang.

I shall now more particularly detail the progress of my own column, to which was allotted the honour of attacking the enemy's right flank. The creek was about forty or fifty yards wide, and was forded with some difficulty, for our shortest

men were up to their necks in water. The men kept their ammunition dry by carrying their pouches on their bayonets. As for myself, I well remember being up to my shoulders in water, with my sword in one hand and my watch held high up in the other. We were permitted to cross over without any molestation from the foe, who might have taken advantage of our helpless state with considerable effect, for the ford must have been within long musket-shot of their position ; still, not a shot was fired, and, from the unaccountable silence that prevailed in the works, we began to feel fully persuaded that the enemy had vacated them. Having emerged from the creek, the column, led by a native guide, began to thread its way through the jungle by a narrow and tortuous pathway, that was to bring us suddenly upon the right face of the stockade, from which, after crossing the creek, our movements were entirely concealed. Colonel Pepper headed the column, while a party of the 3rd Light Infantry covered the advance, throwing out skirmishers on either flank. Our progress was slow, for the jungle was dense ; but we had not advanced many paces before the stillness that had so long reigned was broken by the ring of a musket in the direction of the enemy, accompanied

by the never-to-be-mistaken whistle of a ball. Another and another report followed, at somewhat long intervals, the shot crossing our path, and one lodging in the pouch of a grenadier by my side, who, poor fellow! was killed a few minutes after: his name was Pollock, a lad of twenty. As we advanced, the enemy's skirmishers opened a dropping fire upon us, which, much to the annoyance of the brigadier, was replied to by a continued blaze from the light infantry in front, which of course had only the effect of impeding the column. This interruption, however, soon ceased, and again we began to creep on. But now symptoms of business were discernible, as we passed two or three sepoy's stretched across the pathway, bleeding profusely. Nevertheless, in spite of the show of opposition we had just experienced, a prevalent opinion still existed that the enemy had vacated the place, and that we had been fired upon by a party left to cover their retreat. It was, however, a nervous moment with all hands, I am certain, and every precaution was taken to ensure success. After the firing again all was still—

There was silence, still as death,
And the boldest held his breath,
For a time!

At length the column was halted, the guide

having intimated that we were on the point of issuing from the jungle, between which and the stockade was a partially-cleared space, of about sixty or seventy yards broad. Final *arrangements*—a favourite phrase, by the way, of poor Pepper's—were now made, previous to a dash at the place. A section of European grenadiers was ordered to the front; then came the two scaling-ladders, carried by the Madras pioneers, while the main body were to follow. A few hasty words of encouragement were now addressed by officers of companies to their men, and every one screwed himself up to meet the coming struggle like a man. The soldiers tightened the bayonets on their firelocks with pieces of rag, and divested themselves of all incumbrances, so as to be as much as possible in light marching order, and in condition for scrambling over the stockade, whilst many of the officers threw aside their sling-belts and scabbards. At last the "Advance" was sounded, and immediately taken up by the bugles of the other columns; the word "Forward!" was given, and on we moved in double time, when, taking a sharp turn to the right, we emerged from the jungle, and once more Sittang frowned defiance upon us from its wooden battlements, at a dis-

tance of sixty or seventy yards! Silence still prevailed, and at the moment the head of the column showed itself nothing indicated the presence of a foe. The space in front of the stockade was tolerably open, and thereby we had a fair, though momentary, opportunity of looking our difficulties in the face. The works were strongly constructed of teak timber, of considerable thickness, driven into the ground perpendicularly, and from ten to twelve feet in height. They were looped for musketry, and defended at intervals by square bastions. The place stretched far away to the right and left, an angle intervening between us and the other attacking parties, of whom we consequently saw nothing. As before said, when we first showed ourselves all was still as death; but in a moment the scene was changed! A deadly stream of flame burst from the works, whilst the din of fire-arms, thick clouds of smoke, and the whistling of the musket-balls, as they cleaved the air, were most convincing evidences of the garrison of Sittang being *at home*, and in regular fighting order.

The shock occasioned by the enemy's first discharge was great; but for an instant only the progress of the column was retarded. The volley told most fatally, for it was evident they had been

waiting for us with finger on the trigger, and musket on the rest, whilst the muzzles converged to a point whence we were to issue from the jungle. The effect of such a concentrated fire was as severe as it was instantaneous, and before we could return a shot a considerable number of the leading men were prostrate, many never to rise again, and amongst them the young grenadier before alluded to. This was the last affair of the war in which I was engaged, but it was decidedly the hottest; and at this distance of time I look back with astonishment, not unmingled, I trust, with gratitude, to the severe conflict, out of which I was permitted to come unscathed. The enemy never fired with better effect, or shewed a bolder front; literally we were muzzle to muzzle with them, both sides firing alternately through the same loopholes; the consequence was that the shot, instead of lodging, often went through its victim! How I escaped I know not, for the shot flew thick around, and many a poor fellow was cut down on either side of me. It was, indeed, a shattering fire, and very creditable to the Burmese. Caps were knocked off, breast-plates indented, musket-stocks splintered, and bayonets tinkled as the balls played amongst us!

Though the column staggered for a moment

from the effects of the first volley, it as quickly recovered itself and gallantly faced the dangers that threatened it. For an assaulting party in such a case to return a fire, is, of course, worse than useless; nevertheless, I must confess that many a man did fire and load as fast as he could—an irregularity of which the best-disciplined troops will occasionally be guilty. And here it may be observed, that nothing has a greater tendency to injure the discipline and organization of regular troops than a protracted and desultory jungle warfare. Our scaling-ladders, adapted for two a-breast, were carried by a detachment of the pioneers—a corps of high character in the native army for bravery and endurance in service; in this instance, however, they were less staunch than usual, for they dropped the ladders. I did what I could to encourage some that were near me, but they had not been accustomed to face such a fire as that we were now exposed to; it was, in fact, admirably adapted to “astonish the weak minds of the natives.” This circumstance, of course, gave rise to additional delay and loss of lives. One of the ladders was, however, instantly picked up by the European grenadiers, assisted by the officers, in which I lent a hand, or rather a shoulder. Again the column

pushed on, and in spite of a heavy fire from front and flank—for we were now exposed to a raking fire from the bastions—the summit of the steep ascent on which the stockade stood was gained, and the ladder planted, though the frantic efforts made by the enemy to cast it off again, by thrusting out hundreds of spears through the loopholes and interstices, were astonishing. I remember to have seen our gallant brigadier hacking away at them with his sword most vigorously. The moment the ladder was planted, the true character of the British soldier manifested itself, for our men crowded upon it to such an extent that it broke down beneath their weight! This occasioned a further delay of some minutes, as the other ladder had not been brought up, I rather think. Our ranks were by this time much thinned, and every effort was made to induce the men to take possession of the loopholes through which the foe were assailing us. This plan succeeded admirably, for they gallantly supported their officers, and their well-directed fire had at length the effect of driving back the enemy to a respectful distance, leaving us more at leisure to bring up our other ladder. This was soon accomplished, and planted, and I had the honour to be the first to mount it.

During these operations, which could not have occupied a quarter of an hour, a rattling fire of musketry on the right satisfied us that our friends on that side were hard at it ; still we could as yet learn nothing of them. Upon ascending the ladder, and turning round to cheer on my men, I was sorry to find that we stood almost “ alone in our glory ;” that, in fact, we were not supported as we should have been. This rendered our task more difficult, but still we held our ground. On glancing my eyes, however, far to the right, I recognised, with a shout of joy, our light bobs dropping into the stockade, the enemy falling back and firing before them. This was all right. I called out to the “ lambs ” (the *soubriquet* of the corps) to follow, and in I jumped, coming down *on all fours*, the men following as they best could ; but, on occasions of this kind, officers have a manifest advantage over their men, unencumbered as they are with fire-arms and ammunition.

The stockade was now virtually won, and as our lads came dropping in, one by one, the enemy fell back, keeping up merely a desultory and ill-directed fire upon us from behind the buildings in the interior, without doing much damage. Had they stood firm we never should have seen

the inside of Sittang, for they mustered 1,500; but no sooner were the *pale faces* of the English visible above the works than their resolution forsook them, and their courage, true up to this point, failed. It was my good fortune to be the first in of my column, and, without waiting for a sufficient number of men, I moved on in the direction of the enemy, who were now crowding one of the principal gateways in the rear, to escape, closely followed by a part of one of the other columns. Here men, women and children were huddled together, while the entrance was quite obstructed by the bodies of those who had fallen. A flag of truce had been sent to the enemy, if I am not mistaken, requesting them to send out their families; but it was unattended to, and the unavoidable consequence was, that very many of these poor creatures fell victims. Indeed, it was quite heart-rending to see so many women and children killed, or bleeding to death; some were dreadfully lacerated by the bursting of our shells. After the firing had ceased I fell in with a very handsome young woman, who had been pierced in the breast by a musket-ball, and having with difficulty persuaded an artilleryman, who was busily engaged in plunder, to assist me, I carried her to the surgeon, and be-

fore I left Sittang had the gratification of finding that there was every prospect of her recovery, though she was sinking fast from the loss of blood when I first saw her.

“Forward!” was now the word, and all hands pressed on towards the retreating foe, who made no further attempt at resistance, but either choked up the gateway, or vainly endeavoured to clamber over the stockade by desperate bounds. Some with dishevelled hair and frantic gestures, bleeding profusely, were seen dragging away their women. Quarter was neither asked nor offered—a barbarous mode of warfare, truly, and quite unjustifiable on our side; but, in this instance, some extenuation may be found in the exasperation produced amongst us by the savage enormities inflicted upon the bodies of our comrades on the previous attack.

Borne onwards by the excitement of the moment, I at one time found myself almost alone amidst a crowd of the enemy, as they were madly pressing through the main gateway. Here I cut away right and left, and certainly gave more than one poor fellow a *souvenir* not easily got rid of. They might have made mince meat of me, had they chosen; but they were completely paralyzed.

Our troops now poured in, putting every man within their reach to death. The mass of the enemy, however, escaped, and we were far too weak in numbers, and too exhausted, to attempt to follow them, having made the assault with only 450 men against 1,500, of whom, we were well informed, 1,000 were armed with firelocks. The vicinity of the jungle, which to us was impervious, greatly facilitated their escape. Being now fairly in possession, we began to recognise each other again, and to inquire about casualties. Our loss, we soon ascertained, was unusually heavy for Indian warfare. During the quarter of an hour or twenty minutes we were engaged, eighty-six had fallen, out of 450, being one-fifth of the whole; fifty of these fell in the left column, which consisted of two hundred men; and again, in our grenadiers, only forty-five strong, we had six men killed and twelve wounded! This was sharper work than we had been accustomed to, and from a personal knowledge of the obstacles we could now make great allowances for the original failure of the native infantry. Of twenty-one officers present, two were killed and five wounded, one dangerously. The two officers killed were Captains Cursham and Stedman, both commanding

columns; Major Home, also, who commanded the right column, was severely wounded. The other wounded officers were Colonel Pepper, slightly; Lieut. Fullarton, who was shot through the body, but recovered; Lieut. Power, severely; and Lieut. Charlton, slightly. The enemy's loss was computed at five hundred men, killed and wounded; of these not more than one hundred were found dead in and about the stockade: large numbers of wounded men must, doubtless, have perished in the neighbouring jungle.

In my narrative I have only detailed the progress of the left column. I must not omit to mention that both the other columns did their work admirably throughout, especially the centre one, commanded by poor Stedman, and led by the Light Company of the first Madras European regiment, under Lieut. Howden. They were obstinately opposed, but, being ably and closely supported by the 34th Light Infantry, bore down all before them. There was a very abrupt ascent to climb, and up which to drag the ladders. On reaching the summit Stedman fell, pierced by a dozen balls, having received the contents of an over-loaded swivel in his breast. To this column, I believe, must be ceded the honour of first entering Sittang,

Lieut. Chambers, of the first Madras European regiment, gallantly leading the way. At this distance of time, I have no clear recollection of the operations of the column on the right; but I do remember their having behaved admirably, and that Major Home shewed them a noble example, and was severely wounded at their head.

The conduct of the flank companies of the European regiment upon this occasion was generally admitted to be beyond all praise, and I do not scruple to affirm that the success of the assault must be mainly attributed to their determined bravery and the brilliant example they shewed the sepoys. Their gallantry was at the time highly spoken of by all, and most gratifying were these encomiums to their officers. But that heart which, above all others, would have prized these good opinions had now ceased to beat! Our gallant leader, Cursham, fell outside the stockade, shot through the heart by a musket ball. The last time I saw him alive he was nearly enveloped in smoke, and cheering on his men in the most heroic manner. His military qualifications were of no common order, and long and severely was his loss felt in the corps. I was sadly cut up when I heard he had fallen, for we had long been in the same company, and

he had ever been a kind friend to me. After the place was in our possession, a sergeant of the grenadiers came and told me that the captain was badly wounded outside the works; on which I immediately retraced my steps, and accompanied him to the spot. We soon reached it, and on looking about discovered our dear comrade, alas! not wounded, but quite dead; and many were the tears I shed over him! He was lying on his back, but his features, though calm, had already the leaden hue produced by a wound in the heart. At first it was no easy matter to detect the course of the ball, no blood being visible; but on closer inspection, we discovered a small rent through the jacket and shirt, as if made with a penknife, through which a few drops of blood only had oozed; it was through this trivial aperture that the gallant spirit had escaped! His death must have been instantaneous, and, much as we deplored him, his best friends could not have wished him a nobler exit from this troublesome world, for he fell in the very arms of victory.

When the action was over, we were not altogether free from anxiety, for our little force was sadly crippled, and but ill adapted to the efficient defence of such an extensive stockade, had the

enemy been disposed to attack us during the night with a fresh force. We made, however, the best arrangements we could, and all passed off quietly; and never do I remember to have slept more sweetly than on the night of the 11th January, 1826. A party of us took up our quarters in a sort of temple, the roof of which had been riddled by our artillery, and amongst the broken tiles that strewed the floor our rugs were laid, forming a hard, but by no means despicable, pallet. In the morning I was awoke by a comrade proposing to me to walk round the works and count the dead bodies—a strange mode of passing the time, it will be thought, but somewhat in character with the sort of life we then led. Our doctor had no sinecure of it, for, shameful to say, he was the only one attached to the force; and so overcome with fatigue was he, after attending to all the wounded, that he fainted away. Dr. Richardson was an active and intelligent officer, and a favourite with all. Many of our wounded men died during the night, for, owing to the very short distance at which we engaged the enemy, a large proportion of the wounds proved fatal.

On the 12th, we occupied ourselves in burning the stockade and burying the dead. We

gave the Europeans Christian burial, and the bodies of Cursham and Stedman were consigned to the earth in the clothes in which they fell, and literally "with their martial cloaks around them." The spot selected for their interment was a small enclosed space round a pagoda, and after the ceremony the ground was carefully levelled, to ensure the bodies not being disturbed. We heard afterwards that the spot was discovered by our vindictive foe, and that the honoured remains of our friends were barbarously mutilated. I hope it was not true. Neither did we omit to bury the mangled relics of our unfortunate comrades that had been exposed on gibbets, though the matter was one of some difficulty, owing to their decomposed state.

The interior of Sittang much disappointed our expectations. The village occupied but a small portion of the stockade, whilst the greatest part bore evidences of having been only lately enclosed from the jungle, in the clumps of brushwood, tufts of grass, and stumps of trees, which were everywhere discernible. There was a decent house or two belonging to the priests, and some few religious edifices; the remainder were native huts, constructed of the ordinary materials of

mud and bamboo. I have remarked that the prize-money yielded by a campaign, or the plunder produced by the sacking of a stockade, is pretty much in an inverse ratio to the difficulties encountered; and so it was with the Burmese war in general, and Sittang in particular; for in the present instance, little of value was found excepting a few ruby rings, which our soldiery obtained by methods any thing but gentle, it is to be feared. A small bar of gold fell to the lot of one man, who immediately disposed of it to an officer for Rs. 40 and *a bottle of brandy*. The speculation was not a bad one, for, if I remember rightly, it proved to be worth Rs. 600, or £60. When first sold, the purity of the metal was a matter of doubt.

I cannot refrain here from adverting to the great neglect shewn by our Government to the spiritual wants of the British troops while on service in the field, where of course such wants are most felt. During the Burmese war, which occupied nearly two years and a half, there was no such person as a chaplain attached to the troops, nor do I remember there being any provision for the performance of divine service, though at Rangoon alone there were no fewer

than nine English regiments, besides artillery! In my own corps the Sabbath was observed by officers commanding companies reading the "Articles of War" to their men. By the performance of this duty, and hoisting the British colours on the flag-staff, we thought we sufficiently honoured our Maker!

At seven on the morning of the 13th we re-embarked, and, taking the same route by which we came, reached Shoeghein once more on the morning of the 15th, after an absence of only a week! On the homeward march our spirits were somewhat damped by the breaking out of the cholera, which carried off a few of our best men. The reception we met from our friends at head-quarters was most gratifying; all hands, with the band at their head, came out to greet us, and we marched into our old quarters to the tune of "The British Grenadiers." It was a proud moment for us all to be thus received on our return from a dangerous but successful enterprise.

Thus fell Sittang—not, however, without a severe struggle on both sides, British as well as Burman. Smile not, ye Waterloo men and Peninsula heroes, at the pigmy exploits I have been narrating. It is true, fewer lives are lost

through the sword in Eastern warfare, speaking generally; but a far larger proportion of gallant spirits fall victims to the hardships, privations and diseases incidental to Indian service. There may be less of glory, but there is much more of danger—less of the laurel, but infinitely more of the mournful cypress! For instance: the 1st Madras European regiment lost, in the course of the Burmese war, six hundred men out of nine hundred, landed a little more than two years before. Disease was by far our greatest destroyer; nevertheless, a Burmese bullet did sometimes hit hard, and in the case before us the proportion of killed and wounded to the numbers engaged and space of time occupied may bear comparison with the palmy and bloody days of Talavera and Waterloo!

CHAP. XIII.

CONCLUSION OF THE WAR.

After the fall of Sittang, in January, 1826, the Pegue force, under Colonel Pepper, was obliged, much against the inclination of us all, to remain inactive for some time at Shoeghein, waiting for reinforcements and supplies from Rangoon, immediately upon the arrival of which we were to push on to the strong and important town of Tongho. The advance to Shoeghein from Pegue, and its occupation by our troops, without any material opposition, have previously been touched upon, but the importance of the place, and the interesting natural features that distinguish it, will, I think, justify me in again lightly referring to the subject.

For some days previous to our reaching the point in question our march was through the densest jungle, which, however grateful as a shelter from the sun's rays, was most inconvenient for encamping. The last day's march was most fatiguing, for, though the distance was only eleven miles, and the column got under arms at three in the morning, it was not till one in the day that we were halted in a comparatively open space, about three-quarters of a mile or so in front of Shoeghein, which was still effectually concealed from view by a screen of towering forest trees and thinly scattered underwood, though its position was pretty well indicated by certain heavy columns of smoke and the summit of a pagoda or two. In this glade we piled arms and refreshed ourselves for half an hour, and a picturesque scene we presented, scattered about in groups on the turf. In due time the troops were formed up in three columns, with the guns, six in number, on the right, and every arrangement was made for an attack upon the town at three different points.

We were all soon in motion, and upon emerging somewhat suddenly from the jungle the heads of the columns were checked by the Sit-tang river, a rapid stream with lofty rugged

banks, on the opposite side of which, on a bare plain, was the strongly-stockaded town of Shoe-ghein, at the distance, perhaps, of 300 yards, whilst in the background was a sea of jungle, terminating in the lofty and teak-clad mountains of Martaban. The guns were speedily got into position on a rising ground to our right, and, under cover of their fire, our 1,700 bayonets might have been seen sturdily stemming the stream breast-high in the direction of their fancied opponents, and in three distinct bodies, But from the stillness that pervaded the place when it first opened upon our view, not a shot having been fired at us, I was early impressed with a conviction that it was deserted, and so in truth it proved. A few rounds were fired from the guns, to which no answer was returned, and in a few minutes we entered the town unopposed, and learned from some infirm beings, who had been left in the rear, that the inhabitants had vacated the place only an hour previous to our arrival, thus cheating us out of all the honour and glory upon which we had been fondly building, and for which loss we thought ourselves poorly compensated in the abundant supply of pigs and poultry that the fortune of war had placed at our disposal.

The town of Shoeghein, the capital of an extensive district, and containing probably a population of 30,000 or 40,000, was well built, and strongly stockaded, and its site, at the confluence of the Sittang river and a minor stream, and in the heart of a densely-wooded and mountainous country, was highly picturesque. In its neighbourhood were several points of interest, in religious edifices and pagodas, whilst the sportsman found abundance of work for his gun in the surrounding jungle. By energetic but conciliatory measures, on the part of our brigadier, the panic-stricken population soon returned to their old quarters, when our force was well supplied with all the ordinary productions of the country, buffalo beef and rice being, however, the staple commodities.

On the 7th of March, about two months after our arrival, we were reinforced by 120 of H.M.'s 45th and the 1st M.N.I., 500 strong. This addition to our strength enabled us to commence a forward movement once more, after leaving an efficient garrison in Shoeghein. On the 9th we moved out, in high spirits, about 1,500 strong, and encamped in the jungle, and on the following day we made a similar march, halting on much the same ground; the ultimate point of

attack was Tongho, the key of this part of the country, distant some 150 miles, but there was a strong stockade, called Conkimew, which we calculated upon reaching on the following morning. On this day an event of much interest transpired.

Marching in Ava was a very different matter from marching in India; our comforts were few, and all our establishments were on the most contracted scale, owing mainly to the difficulty of getting draft and carriage cattle to the extent we required. Few officers enjoyed the luxury of a tent to themselves, two or three generally chumming together in a small bechovah or row-tie, somewhere about eight feet square. At this late period of the war, however, we were most of us mounted on the tough little ponies of the country. On the day in question, long before the first streak of dawn was visible in the east above the dark mass of forest, we were roused from our sound slumbers, and dreams of sweet, though distant, home, by the familiar beat of "*the general.*" Our encampment was an imperfectly cleared space in the very heart of the jungle, very inconveniently sprinkled with stunted bushes and stumps of trees. On all sides we were enveloped in impervious forest,

through which wound the narrow and tortuous road, or rather pathway, that was *said* to lead to Tongho: and as day dawned upon us, in every direction might be heard the crowing of the jungle cock and the screaming of the parouquet and peafowl, which, though not the most euphonious music in the world, had nevertheless an enlivening effect, especially upon a sportsman's ear. In due time, our tents were struck, our traps packed, and the music having ceased, bayonets were unfixed, and, "marching at ease," the column might have been discerned, though not without difficulty, by the dubious morning light, dragging its slow length along the rugged forest track before spoken of, and which on either side was deeply overshadowed by the matted and verdant foliage. The officers, according to custom, had left the ranks and mounted their sturdy Pegue ponies, and a group of us, wrapped closely in our boat-cloaks (for the forest morning air was raw and humid), followed in the rear of the corps, smoking our cheroots, and chatting on passing events. That morning's march did not exceed seven miles, but the road was execrable, and great were the difficulties our artillery had to contend with, for a gun would occasionally stick fast in a quagmire, or in the bed of a

rivulet, from which it could only be extricated by the timely assistance of an elephant, who, at the word of command from his guide, would apply his forehead to the gun, and push it out bodily. This process I have witnessed, and an interesting spectacle it is, though in the East, that land of wonders, by no means an uncommon one. On these marches, our breakfast, generally in the shape of buffaloes, preceded the head of the column, all alive, so that by the time we were ready for them beefsteaks smoked upon the mess-table—somewhat fresh to be sure—an hour having perhaps scarcely elapsed since the animal was alive, but it was not the less relished on that account.

Our encampment in this instance was on tolerable ground, but very rocky, and, to our extreme annoyance, sadly infested with scorpions, which were crawling about in all directions. It might have been about noon, and most of us, after a hearty breakfast on the aforesaid buffalosteaks, were enjoying a siesta, when a most unusual and exciting shout roused us from the repose we were courting. We soon learned that despatches had just reached our brigadier, informing him of peace having been at length concluded between the British and his golden-footed

majesty, within forty miles of the capital, upon which Sir Archibald Campbell was marching with the main army; the European prisoners had been given up to us, and twenty-five lacs of rupees paid down in hard coin, and there was satisfactory evidence that this time the Burmese were in earnest. This happy result was brought about by the rapidity with which our gallant troops followed up their successes on the banks of the Irrawaddy. To be sure, the opening of the campaign in November was inauspicious, our troops having met with a serious reverse at Wattegaun, in the neighbourhood of Prome, when Colonel McDowall was killed, and 250 other officers and men killed and wounded; this failure, however, was soon forgotten in subsequent successes, and a series of victorious affairs at Sembike, Nepailee, Melloon and Pajahm Mew, costing us, however, many valuable lives, had at length the effect of humbling the pride of Ava, and compelling its king to sue for peace to save his capital from destruction. Grateful as was the intelligence to some, it was not so to all, for there was a large portion of restless and adventurous spirits, especially amongst the European part of our force, who would gladly have exchanged all the blessings and comforts of peace

for the rambling and exciting mode of life which upwards of two years on active service had not only rendered quite familiar to us, but absolutely attractive. Of this class I believe I was one—a predilection that may perhaps be thought excusable at the age of twenty, and my appointment to the adjutancy of the regiment, which reached me by the same mail that brought us intelligence of the peace, barely reconciled me to a removal from the grenadier company, to which I had long been attached, and the loss of all the honour and glory promised by a march through the jungle to Tongho, to say nothing of the chances of picking up the fever *en route*.

We halted a clear day upon the receipt of the above intelligence, and on the 13th of March we re-entered our old quarters at Shoeghein. It must be observed that, on the very day upon which we commenced our retrograde movement a most virulent fever broke out amongst us, carrying off many in a few days, and filling our hospitals rapidly; so that, had it been our destiny to advance instead of retire, it is probable that the greater part of us would have perished in the jungle, whilst the remnant of the small force would have fallen an easy prey to the foe, for undoubtedly the malignant fever that so sud-

denly shewed itself originated in the vast mass of putrifying vegetable matter with which that sea of forest abounds.

All the British troops in Ava were now retiring upon Rangoon, in virtue of the treaty just concluded, and the Pegue column soon moved by detail in the same direction. It was not, however, till the 25th of March, that the force finally quitted Shoeghein, and indeed it so happened, that we were literally driven out of the town some hours before we intended, not, however by a human enemy, but by fire ; some mischievous vagabonds, it is to be feared, amongst our own people, having set fire to the town at different points during the night ; and from the inflammable nature of the materials of which it was mainly constructed, at the hour we marched the best part of the town was destroyed. Great was the excitement of that night ; we laid ourselves down ready drest, but sleep we could not, and long before dawn we were summoned together by the beat of the *long roll*, and were marched through the flaming streets, amidst the crackling of burning bamboos and the noise of falling rafters, which somewhat interrupted the martial strains of our band. This conflagration, originating probably in sheer mischief, was,

doubtless, much to be regretted; had the town been fully inhabited, it would most likely never have occurred; but, strange as it may sound, the moment it was rumoured that we were about to fall back, the native occupants rapidly deserted the town, and moved in the direction of Rangoon, apprehensive, perhaps, of the vengeance of their Burmese rulers for having aided and abetted us *rebel strangers*. Thus, the comparatively empty state of the place offered a temptation to certain *mauvais sujets*, which they could not resist, for having a bonfire on a grand scale, in honour, no doubt, of the peace.

In due time, after quitting Shoeghein, we reached the small post of Meekoo, on the Sittang river, passing one day the bodies of some of our sepoy, who had fallen in an encounter with the enemy only a few days previously, the terms of the late treaty perhaps not having been quite comprehensible or congenial to the obtuse intellects of the forest rangers of these parts, who, accordingly, would not let us pass through their domains, though for the last time, without a parting shot. At Meekoo we halted for nine or ten days, our old quarters at Pegue not being ready to receive us. We were encamped on an arid plain, without a tree to shade us, and the

heat, under canvas, was intolerable, the thermometer being, at mid-day, usually 120° in our tents: indeed the hot season of Ava was now at its height.

During our short stay at Meekoo, I had rather an interesting meeting with a party of Burmans who had formed a portion of the garrison of Sittang, which place, it may be remembered, has been described as fifteen miles below the village at Meekoo, and on the reverse bank of the stream. The stockade had been entirely destroyed by us after its capture by assault in January, but it had been since re-built and occupied as before (so at least we had been given to understand), and the individuals now alluded to, about a dozen, were a sort of piquet, thrown out apparently from the stronghold of Sittang to watch our movements. I found them on my return from a shooting excursion, with their canoes drawn up under the bank, about a mile below our encampment. They were all armed with muskets, and the head of each was adorned with a sort of cap, made of peacocks' feathers,—an unusual circumstance, which attracted our attention, and we found, upon enquiry, that the honour of wearing these feathers was assigned them for the gallant and successful defence of

Sittang when attacked by the 3rd Light Infantry on the 7th January.

On the 7th of April we once more entered Pegue, after an absence of three or four months, and re-occupied our old position at the base of Shoemadoo Prau, and here we were to wait patiently till summoned to Rangoon, to embark finally for India. In the meanwhile Sir Archibald Campbell had reached Rangoon, and the greatest exertions were made for the expeditious removal of our troops from the country. Several regiments had already embarked for India; but our corps, although one of the first to arrive in Burmah, was to be detained in the country till nearly the last.

The buffalo of Pegue has been occasionally alluded to as differing much from that of Hindostan. It is monstrous in size, and most savage in temper, though a domestic animal. It has the same antipathy to scarlet as horned cattle in England, as we soldiers often found to our imminent hazard, and many of our poor fellows were gored. In one instance I was taking an evening ride with a brother officer in Pegue, when, in skirting the old ditch that encircles the fort, we came somewhat abruptly upon a large herd of these animals taking their

evening bath, their heads only being visible above water. On our approaching, one fellow rose up from the mud in which he had been wallowing, and stared at us most inauspiciously; this movement was instantly followed up by a similar one on the part of the whole drove, who simultaneously dashed out of the water, and rushed after us at full speed! We, of course, put spurs to our ponies, and galloped off into the jungle by the first track that presented itself; and it was only by this means we escaped their fury, for soon on all sides we heard the under-wood crackling before them, but luckily they did not take our road, when we were soon beyond their reach. I lost my cap, however, in the race, though I found it again the same evening, having returned when the coast was clear. Whilst in the act of escaping the brutes, I contrived to slip off my red jacket and tuck it under my arm, for this it was that caused the alarm. On another occasion three of us were out shooting near the same point, when one of these monsters came down upon us at the charge step; there was, of course, a general retreat, and the enemy's progress was only checked by my discharging at him my fowling-piece, which was loaded with snipe shot.

Amongst the incidents of the day at Pegue, must be noticed the fact of several of our European soldiers at this place deserting to the Burmese, having, doubtless, been attracted by extravagant offers on the part of their emissaries. Not less than a dozen men, including a sergeant, dropped off, one by one, generally at night, and we never had any further tidings of them. Peace having been made, the matter was of less importance, and the deserters were mostly such worthless characters that they were not much missed by us. Such desertions, however, were by no means confined to the Madras European Regiment.

At length the order for our embarkation arrived, and in furtherance of it we bade a final adieu to Pegue on the 7th of June, duly arriving at Rangoon without meeting with any unusual adventure on our passage, embarking forthwith in the transport *Argyle*.

The period had now arrived when the link that had bound us and our fortunes to Ava for upwards of two years was to be severed, and probably for ever. Some there were who quitted with absolute regret the soil upon which had passed some of the most exciting and interesting events of their lives, and to whom a camp life,

with all its discomforts, had become not only familiar, but absolutely sweet; such individuals now looked on with a melancholy air as the tents, under the folds of which had been spent so many merry hours, were being consigned to the vessel's hold! Others there were, and those not a few, who had connected themselves with the country by *liaisons* of a far different and more tender kind: but this is delicate ground, and I must tread softly: suffice it to say, that now, in very many instances, where Burman damsels and British soldiers were concerned,

—— there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated;

many fond hearts, in fact, that had long been united, were now to be torn asunder by the iron hand of military discipline, which did not allow any native ladies accommodation on board the transports, though in many cases they tried to avail themselves of it, even in disguise! The tears that were shed on the occasion in question were most abundant.

Though it required three large vessels, or about 1,800 tons of shipping, to convey us originally to the seat of war, one vessel only, and that under 500 tons, sufficed to take back

the tattered relics of the corps, reduced now to about 200, including officers, though a little more than two years previously we had landed in all 900 strong. Of these, not less than 600 had been cut off by disease and the sword, whilst the 100 unaccounted for were probably sent off previously to the coast invalided. In addition, however, to ourselves, there were embarked somewhere about 400 camp-followers, making, together with the crew, not less than 700 souls, in a vessel of 450 tons! The crowding of so many human beings together for a voyage that would probably extend to a month or six weeks, owing to the prevalence of the south-west monsoon, was a most ill-judged measure, and the inconvenience and misery it entailed on all, especially on the poor ill-clad followers, who during the whole passage were unavoidably exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, were inconceivable. The officers were about a dozen in number on board, and nine of us occupied the gun-room, in common with most of our servants, there being literally no room for them elsewhere; and in addition there was our baggage, so that altogether we had a tolerable cram. One of my servants, however, who had served me faithfully through the whole

war, (but certes a scamp of the first order, having served his apprenticeship as cook-boy in an European regiment), having asked permission to go ashore, never returned; and when looking over my traps, I found the rascal had relieved me of all my ready cash. The country had evidently charms for him that could not be resisted, and I heard afterwards of his having set up a grog-shop at Rangoon, doubtless with my abstracted rupees. There was one less, at all events, to crowd the gun-room of the *Argyle*.

It was, I think, on the morning following our embarkation that we bid farewell to Burmah, that land of pine-apples, pagodas and poonghies; and as we gazed from the poop for the last time upon the now rapidly-receding spire of Shoe Dagon, there were some heavy hearts amongst us, for the link was now effectually severed, and the prospect of playing at soldiers again, perhaps for years, on the arid parade-ground of Masulipatam, by no means reconciled many of us to a cessation of the honours and the hardships of active service.

After a short sojourn of three days at Acheen, which the monsoon obliged us to visit, we pursued our course to India, and anchored once more in the Masulipatam roads, by the end of

July, after a most rough and disagreeable passage of six weeks from Rangoon. Upon landing we found the old place (the most unpopular station, by the way, of the Madras army) looking in all respects as ugly, though as natural, as ever; and as the war-worn relics of "the Lambs," reduced now to a sort of *elegant extracts* of some 150 rank and file, marched off to their old quarters, their appearance contrasted painfully with their strong and efficient state when they embarked at the same point for foreign service, upwards of two years before; indeed, a month or two after we landed, the corps was reduced to such a skeleton that we only mustered thirty-five file, or seventy men, on parade.

Here end my "Reminiscences of the Burmese War;" and if their perusal shall have awakened in the breasts of my old friends and comrades in the East any pleasing recollections of our arduous but interesting campaigns in Ava, the consideration of having in any degree contributed to their pleasure will ever be to me a source of the greatest gratification.

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